Good morning, distinguished members of the Mannes Institute and welcome aboard its maiden voyage. Of all the fabulous *bon voyages* I’ve received, two stand out: first from Rick Cohn, who graciously called this “a wonderful moment for the field of music theory,” and second from Martin Scherzinger, who said the same thing in slightly hipper terms, by calling it a “theory happening.”

Of course there’ve been similar happenings in our field long before this, and one of them actually took place exactly 450 years ago to this very day. It was today, the 9th of June, back in 1551, that Judge Danckerts rendered his infamous verdict against Nicola Vicentino, concluding his week-long debate with Don Vicente Lusitano on chromatic versus diatonic modes, waged before an equally austere assembly of learned aristocrats such as you. Those were the heady days when music theory was the subject of heated public controversy, with opposing scholars arguing the pros and cons of important tonal matters.

Perhaps unlike most of you, Rick’s “wonderful moment” for me has more to do with form than content—that is, with the structural idea of the Institute itself as a process, rather than the substantive ideas of theory we’re about to explore. It’s the thought of gathering some of the finest musical minds in the country, and putting them together in small groups guided by one of their peers for the purpose of teaching each other that intrigues me most. As Marshall McLuhan said, I think it’s the medium here that’s the message. With due deference to everything that follows, that’s what’s really new, not the history of theory.

You, the members of this Institute, constitute an egalitarian learning community, a gathering of scholars dedicated to mutual enlightenment. And as I kindle our flame initiating this theory happening, I’d like to trace the history of that structural idea in itself. The fact is virtually every educational experience I’ve known is premised on an intellectual gulf between teacher and
student. One talks, the other listens. You don’t need to be Foucault’s disciple to detect a power or status inequality at play there. American education is slightly better than Europe in that regard, but hierarchical nonetheless.

Sure, we sometimes join informal study groups for exams or maybe book clubs at one time or another, but these are transitory, loosely structured, and for me, of little value. Joe Straus, who helped flush out the interactive idea of this Institute, insists that somewhere beyond the Hudson he has on occasion managed to round up a small coterie of colleagues to chew the intellectual fat—Kofi Agawu, Scott Burnham, and others have been known to drop by—but certainly that’s not the norm in, how shall I say, more settled parts of the known academic world.

I personally confess to knowledge of remote affinities in the realm of law, under the rubric of “continuing professional education.” But these are unabashedly practical, pecuniary, and for the most part, pedestrian affairs, far from our loftier scholastic ambitions. I’m also familiar with debates between rabbinic authorities spanning centuries in the Talmud, but again these are meetings of the mind through time rather than space, like Schenker’s argumentation with the buried Rameau. Given the overwhelming predominance of hierarchical educational structures, where might we discover a precedent as radically egalitarian yet paradoxically, as elitist as our own assembly today, particularly in the realm of music? Martin and Rick are absolutely right: this is indeed a happening scene, but surely it can’t be the first of its kind.

Perhaps the best known study group in music history is the Florentine Camerata, haunting every graduate exam as the cradle of opera. The Camerata, you recall, was a gathering of musicians and other smart people at the house of Giovanni de Bardi in late sixteenth-century Florence. Giulio Caccini, one of its members, reports that a great part of the nobility, leading musicians, poets, philosophers, and men of genius”—no women yet—“all convened there.” Bardi’s discussion group, or let me stretch it to “workshop,” was not confined to music, but roamed over a broad scope of learned topics, including poetry, astrology, and science. Bardi’s patronage and leadership in establishing the Camerata indeed played a decisive role in articulating the aesthetic principles culminating in the birth of opera.

Despite its posthumous fame, however, this circle was merely one of several similar gatherings devoted to intellectual dialogue in those days. The revival of classical learning stimulated a general interest in the idea of learning itself. Plato’s Academy, which was named after the mythological hero Academus, was the prototype for over two hundred scholarly societies in Italy alone. At the core of this movement was the belief that the arts—indeed the very act of discussing and learning about artistic matters—imparted the elevating moral and curative effect postulated in antiquity. Participants such as yourselves convened to rediscover the legendary effects of the arts through research, discourse, and experimentation.

The pioneer in this revival of ancient scholarly communities was Marsilio Ficino, a musician who first established the Accademia Platonica in Florence as early as 1470. Supported by the Médicis, this association of the best and the brightest included the most illustrious scholars, musicians, and literati of the day. Over the next one hundred years similar groups imitated Ficino’s institute on the Italian peninsula and elsewhere, increasingly organized with written manifestos of scholarly objectives, philosophical premises, and rigorous criteria for admittance.

By the turn of the century, the concept of an egalitarian body of scholars convened for the purpose of interactive education, quite apart from the hierarchical tradition of the university, was firmly established. In this broader context, Bardi’s Camerata is just one in an entire galaxy of proto think–tanks flickering across sixteenth-century Europe. And even though it was Bardi’s
group that laid the cornerstone of opera, from the perspective of educational structure, other
 groups were of far greater interest—first because they were more organized, and second because
 unlike the Camerata, they maintained historical records of their membership and proceedings.
 Among them we find the Accademia della Crusca in Florence, Domenico Venier’s Academy in
 Venice, the Accademia Vittoria in Verona, the Floridi in Bologna, and the Arcadia in Rome.
 These bodies convened on a routine basis to explore various topics, including the theory of
 music, competing for the most prominent members in their field.

 The Camerata was also not the only such club to affect the course of music history. Venier’s
 group, for instance, promoted Bembo’s theories of vernacular literature influencing the
development of the madrigal. The Accademia della Fama played a significant role in the
publication of Zarlino’s famous treatise, perhaps as his price of admission into that society, but
also by lending instant prestige and readership among the Venetian intellectual elite. His
academy eventually was suppressed after a series of “dubious financial transactions,” upon
which its founder and leading faculty were carted off to prison.

 The best societies though have more colorful names that create an enchanting kaleidoscope
of intellectual vitality to help prime our own latter-day Camerata centuries later. There was, for
instance, the holistic Academy of Unison in Perugia, the lofty Academy of Elevati or Elevated
Ones in Florence, the mysterious Accademia degli Incogniti in Venice, and the romantic
Academy of Infatuated Ones in Napoli. My personal favorite by far, and my conceptual model
for our own convocation, was the Accademia degli Alterati, or ancient Academy of Altered Ones
in 16th-century Florence. In fact, key members of the Camerata, including Corsi, Mei, Doni,
Rinuccini, and even Bardi himself were also Alterati on the side.

 In his inaugural declaration of the Alterati’s objectives, anticipating my own today, its
founder Giulio del Bene proclaimed the goal as their “alteration” or transformation into changed
beings—Alterati—enlightened through the collective pursuit of knowledge. Their symbol was a
vat for pressing wine heaped with grapes, representing the transformative and distilling power of
an idea. In pursuit of this aim, the Altered Ones would baptize themselves in the wine of
collaborative thought. There were scholarly discourses, theoretical debates on various issues, and
mutual criticism of each others’ research.

 Music was a recurrent topic of consideration, though like our own gathering, professional
musicians were entirely absent, as well as the slightest trace of any actual music-making itself.
Indeed, it was out of a desire to hear some real sound that Bardi and his clan played hooky at
these highbrow seminars and hung out in the Camerata. The topics were broad-ranging, although
a famous member once questioned whether sex was a suitable theme for scholarly discourse.
Those guilty of tardiness or absence were challenged to deliver an extemporaneous lecture on an
arcane topic of interest.

 The best thing about the Alterati though is that everyone had a nickname or pseudonym—
something perhaps we’ll defer to a later year. Bardi, for instance, was called il Puro, or the Pure
One, Girolamo Mei was il Pianigiano or the Steady One, del Bene was the Desirous One, and
Rinuccini the Bold One. But my favorite Alterati were guys like the Tender One, the Silent One,
even the Horrid and Dismembered Ones, and apparently as in all Accademia, there was the
Dubious One, the Late One, and best of all of course, the Drowsy One. Perhaps after four days of
meeting like this, we too will find these nicknames as meaningful as they are humorous.

 Anyway, now that I’ve plainly established the pedigree of our Institute by tracing its origins
in the Renaissance, if not to ancient Greece, it’s time to get on with the reason we’re all here,
which despite my prerogative, is not to hear me. My job is lighter of the flame, so now let our
games begin. As its founding Director, I hereby call to order the first annual session of the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory before all of you, its distinguished faculty and fellows. Invoking the spirit of the ancient Alterati, let us each pursue what lies ahead with fulsome dedication to our mutual goal of intellectual collaboration, our unwavering quest for knowledge, and with steadfast conviction in the transformative power of an idea that so impassioned our predecessors, during their own rebirth in a gentler age so very long ago.

The First Copyright Case

Most of us would agree that Johann Sebastian Bach marks perhaps the most important turning point in the history of music. But my guess is not many of us realize the equally pivotal role his family played in the history of musical copyright. This is a story that exemplifies a position I will argue in these morning sermons over the next few days—that the evolution of musical copyright is a legitimate, albeit somewhat obscure member of what Thomas calls genres of historical music theory.

After Bach’s death in 1750, only his youngest son, Johann Christian, defiantly broke with his father’s contrapuntal style and embraced a more accessible idiom embodying the democratic spirit of the Enlightenment. The “London Bach,” as he is called, spent most of his career as an expatriate in England where he became one of the most successful composers of his day and the single most important influence on young Mozart, who elevated his innovative technique to the level of genius. The youngest Bach, in my view, is sorely underappreciated both historically and musically as well.

But aside from J.C. Bach’s musical stature, what role did he play in the development of music copyright? Well, J.C. it turns out, brought the world’s first music copyright case. It’s he who’s responsible for establishing something we all now take for granted: that music is protected by law.

Ironically, the crucial date, once again, is exactly the same as today: the 10th of June—224 years ago in the year of our Lord, 1777. Instead of sitting here in the concert hall of Mannes, we’re now gathered in the courtroom of the Honorable Lord Mansfield, Chief Justice of the King’s Bench, as the bailiff calls case 7352, the action of Bach versus Longman. Plaintiff’s attorney, Mr. Robinson, arises and declares that his client, son of Bach, recently crafted some new keyboard works in the modern idiom—the Op. 5 sonatas to be precise—which had achieved popularity among the English middle class. The music was not only a hit, but an important musical contribution to the emerging classical style. Footnote: Mozart was so impressed he later arranged three of them as piano concerti.

Across our aisle sits the sleazy defendant, Mr. James Longman, kingpin of a powerful music publishing dynasty in London. Recognizing the commercial bonanza of Bach’s melodious tunes, Longman blithely pirated the works and took them to market himself. Being the son of the irascible Sebastian—we know the father’s own legal entanglements—young J.C. did something no one else apparently ever considered doing before. In today’s vernacular, he slapped a summons on poor Longman and took him to court for musical infringement. Although without precedent, Bach rested his case on the world’s first copyright law, the Statute of Anne enacted in 1710, briefly entitled “An Act for the Encouragement of Learning, by Vesting the Copies of Printed Books in the Authors or Purchasers of such Copies during the Times therein Mentioned.”

But young J.C. faced a serious problem, because the Queen’s statute said absolutely nothing at all about music. Sure it expressly protected rights in “books and other writings,” but didn’t
happen to say one single word about music. Moreover, in the 67 years since the law’s enactment, no one had ever claimed that it should. It wasn’t surprising therefore that Mr. Wood’s first defense—he’s defendant’s attorney for Longman—was that the Statute of Anne just didn’t apply to music. And furthermore, Wood continued, there’s a bloody good reason why it didn’t. One of the basic principles of copyright is that it only protects concrete physical things that you can actually own, not ephemeral ideas that are merely abstract. Music is temporary sound—you can’t see it or touch it. It’s intangible argued the barrister, and therefore you can’t possibly own it.

So here for the very first time in history was the fundamental question that no one had really asked before: is music protected by copyright or not? Of course we all know that it is, but that’s only because Bach’s son dared to ask that very question way back then.

And who on the face of this earth could possibly answer him? None less than the greatest jurist in British legal history and its first truly modern judge: Sir William, Earl of Mansfield. England was becoming the leading economic nation in the world, and Mansfield was determined to establish a rational legal framework for its development. He understood that music had become an important economic and cultural commodity. Copyright was essential to create a civilized musical marketplace, instead of a chaotic jungle plagued by pirates and predators like Longman. Copyright would establish the reign of law over music.

And so after listening to attorneys Robinson and Wood, the Chief Justice took it upon himself to proclaim what we all now assume today: music can be owned. By interpreting the term “other writings” in the statute broadly enough to include musical notation too, he ushered in the modern era of music publishing. It would take America over half a century to come to this same realization. “Music is a science,” wrote Mansfield. “It may be written, and the mode of conveying its ideas is by signs and marks. Writing is not confined to language or letters. A person may use a musical copy by playing it, but he has no right to rob the composer of his profit by multiplying and disposing of copies for his own further use.”

And so, J.C. Bach, son of the almighty Sebastian, won history’s first music case back in 1777. Lord Mansfield proceeded to modernize the rest of English law, setting the stage for the global economy. Ironically, John Longman, history’s first adjudicated musical infringer, repented at the hands of the great Mansfield and became noted for the generous sums he thereafter paid to composers for the right to publish their scores—a generosity that ultimately drove him to bankruptcy. In a further twist of fate, Longman’s firm resurfaced like a phoenix years later to publish the English translation of Schenker’s Free Composition—which is the only reason we may utter his name.

But it is the youngest son, the forgotten London Bach, whom we must thank for establishing once and for all, and for everyone since, that both the noblest sonata, yet the simplest song, is safely sheltered by the shield of the law. And it is through that son, transmitting the spirit of the father, that our most cherished musical treasures are preserved and safely guarded for all generations to forever enjoy.

**Petrucci and Antico**

Two days ago I played up the fact that June 9, the opening day of the Institute, precisely marked the 450th anniversary of Dankert’s decision in the musical debate between Vicentino and Lusitano back in 1551. And then I shocked you yet again by revealing that yesterday, June 10, marks exactly the 224th anniversary of the first music copyright case of Bach v. Longman back in 1777.
Now here we are on the third day of the Institute, and you’re quite certain that I’ve bitten off more than I can chew, and can’t possibly come up with yet another important anniversary. But you’re wrong. The significance of today, June 11, is that—astonishingly—it’s the birthday of my Aunt Harriet in Detroit. No doubt the remarkable alignment of all three of these anniversaries confirms to many of you not only the musical, but more importantly, the astrological significance of why we are gathered here. There’s not much more to say about old Harriet, other than her instrumental completion of this trinity of mystical occurrences.

Actually though it was only just a few weeks ago, May 15 to be exact, that we celebrated the anniversary of an event that even overshadows the birth of my sweet aunt, and that is the landmark publication of this very book right here, one of the most important volumes in the entire history of music, Petrucci’s *Odhecaton* published on May 15, 1501, now turning 500 years old just a few weeks ago. I’d like to discuss that critical event this morning not from a musicological perspective—that I’ll happily defer to others here—but rather from a legal one, once again on the grounds that the evolution of musical copyright I’ve been chatting about is itself a modest tributary to the stream of historical music theory we’re forging over these few days.

As I explained yesterday, the modern system of musical copyright blossomed in the 18th century with the case of Bach v. Longman. But if we’ve learned anything here at all, it’s that musical flowers grow from those little stamens and pistils that precede it. During the 17th century, as many of you know, England and France developed a system of royal licenses to stationers, or book publishers, that protected their commercial expectations while primarily serving to enforce the government’s interest in literary censorship.

But these in turn were modeled on an even earlier proto-copyright system of privileges during the Italian Renaissance. At the center of that early development were three crucial figures: Ottaviano Petrucci, the world’s first great music publisher, Andrea Antico, his able competitor, and Bartolomeo Tromboncino, one of the most popular composer of the day. The drama between these three players foreshadows the evolution of musical copyright over the next 500 years.

Petrucci of course is the Gutenberg of music. He was the first person to apply the printing press invented in 1451 to music. Before that, music was copied by hand and later engraved on wooden blocks, both of which placed severe limitations on the speed of production, size of the inventory, and scope of circulation. Petrucci spearheaded a technological revolution in music. His adaption of printing to music marked the transition from single to multiple editions and opened up a new and wider market for its sale and distribution than ever existed before. On May 25, 1498, Petrucci obtained the first exclusive government privilege to print music using his revolutionary technology in Venice, prohibiting anyone from copying his publications within that territory for 20 years. It took him another three years of technological and business efforts before he finally published the first printed book of polyphonic music on May 15, 1501 last month—exactly 500 years ago—called “One Hundred Polyphonic Songs,” or simply the *Odhecaton*.

Petrucci’s famous publication—a facsimile of which collected dust on my piano during the reception—primarily contained the work of composers from France and the Netherlands such as Josquin, Bunois, Obrecht, and Issac. But he never obtained, nor was it even considered necessary to first obtain their permission as composers to publish their music. Petrucci simply chose those popular pieces he figured he could sell best, and went ahead and published them.

The success of Petrucci’s groundbreaking publication was immediate, so he followed it up with two further editions. He quickly realized that he could sell more books if he chose more
popular music. The newest and catchiest items of the day were accessible Italian songs or *frottola*, precursor of the madrigal. So in 1504, Petrucci published the first of several highly successful volumes of frottola, in an easier, portable, and widely usable format addressed as much to amateurs as professionals. The majority of these songs were composed by Bartolomeo Tromboncino, but once again, Petrucci never sought or obtained his permission to publish this music, nor did he pay the composer any royalties from its sale. He simply cashed in on what was already popular, and strolled to the bank.

Whatever we now think of his business ethics, Petrucci’s achievement not only changed the face of music publishing, but the nature of Italian music itself. By creating a new market for the indigenous Italian song, combined with the technological means for its effective distribution, he furthered its musical growth as well. His success led to the preservation of numerous pieces that would otherwise have been lost, and the development of Italian music as a whole. The publication of frottola, with its overall simplicity of means and directness of expression, instilled a new vitality and sense of cultural identity in Italy after years of stagnation, generating a musical renewal that culminated in the birth of opera.

The only serious challenge to Petrucci’s monopoly came from his ambitious rival, Andrea Antico. Antico saw that Petrucci’s publication of Italian songs was a commercial goldmine in a bullish market. So he set out to compete, but instead of copying Petrucci’s high-tech approach, he stuck with the tried and truer method of wood blocks in order to keep his overhead down. Since Petrucci’s rights were confined to Venice, Antico obtained an exclusive privilege to publish his own songbook in Rome. Antico took advantage of the lack of interterritorial protection among these independent jurisdictions and simply published the very same songs Petrucci had published in Venice. As before, the majority of these were composed by Tromboncino, who still never gave his permission to or received a single penny from either one.

Petrucci meanwhile was absolutely livid, and even went so far as to print up and sell one of Antico’s own compositions in retaliation. The struggle between these two rivals took off from there, each one stealing the other’s material back and forth in a way that would even make Adam Smith blush, until other competitors eventually joined what had now become a virtual feeding frenzy, pirating both their publications in other places like Siena and Naples where neither was protected. In the end, both Petrucci and Antico finally threw in the towel, driven out of business by unregulated competition and musical piracy caused by the lack of inter-municipal copyright protection.

Meanwhile, after years of being ripped off by these and other shrewd compatriots, Tromboncino finally got smart and decided to take matters into his own hands. In 1521 he actually became the first composer in history to obtain a privilege preventing others from using his music without his consent. Yes, Tromboncino had a lock on his own scores, but no, it never helped him, because like most composers he couldn’t figure out how to publish them himself anyway. The cold fact is that from the very beginning, copyright has always been a right of publishers, not authors. It was created by businessmen, not artists, to protect themselves from each other, and their investments from all the rest of us. Privileges were granted to sell music, not create it. Even Horace back in ancient Rome complained that his publishers, the Sosius brothers, got rich—while he only got famous.

Notwithstanding Tromboncino’s early but empty success, the real battle for full recognition of creative rights in music only occurred with the emergence of a stronger capitalist marketplace and the concept of original authorship in the 18th and 19th centuries. Even then, composers remained at the mercy of musical pirates, particularly across foreign borders. Mozart was
plagued by dishonest editors who made secret copies of his scores and peddled them in distant lands. But alas, our dear Wolfgang himself wasn’t above stealing the story for *The Abduction from the Seraglio* from a German playwright without ever obtaining his permission or paying him dime.

Live performances of music, in particularly, as opposed to print, weren’t protected by copyright until relatively recently, primarily since there was no practical way to physically monitor them. It was only in our century in fact that protection to live and eventually recorded musical renditions fully emerged. If my paper gets accepted at the national conference next year, in an unexpected departure from this year’s resounding rejection, you’ll hear tales of intrigue from the annals of music copyright of how the likes of Borodin and Shostakovitch were taken to the mat by some crafty American entrepreneurs.

But the seeds of this fascinating struggle were sown long ago in the Italian soil of the Renaissance and the guerilla skirmishes between Petrucci, Antico, and Tromboncino. And like war itself, the arsenal for waging it has increased exponentially. Ever new technologies far beyond Gutenberg’s wildest imagination—our copy machines, our tape recorders, those CD burners and scanners, and now the invidious Napster—all place increasingly complex and near overwhelming demands on the very idea of private musical or even intellectual property altogether. Copyright itself may become a casualty of the confrontation initiated by this very book.

And this, I daresay, is just one of the monumental challenges we now confront in our own quite incomprehensible age—as scholars, authors, composers, teachers, and yes, as lovers of music—just like our embattled predecessors on that dramatic stage now half a millennium ago.

---

*Banquet Speech*

In my opening remarks at the beginning of the Institute a few very long days ago, I told you that the closest model I could dig up for the Mannes Institute was the Accademia degli Alterati, or Academy of Altered Ones, back in sixteenth-century Florence. As I explained, the “altered state” they were referring to was the enlightenment of their members through the communal pursuit of knowledge. You may remember, the great symbol of the Alterati was the vat of wine from pressed grapes, representing their transformation from a lower state to a higher distillation of wisdom and virtue itself.

Tonight, two beers later, the significance of the vat seems somewhat less abstract. I think as a group we’re approaching that altered state, or at least *an* altered state. I’m even starting to see the logic of the Alterati’s wonderful nicknames, like Joel the Effusive One, Kofi the Skeptical One, Sarah the Patient One, Fred the Provocative One, and Janna the Passionate One. I won’t attempt to identify the Horrid or Dismembered Ones like the Alterati.

In order to achieve their desired transformation of course, the Alterati had to meet at least once or better twice a week, much like my psychiatrist insists. As suspected, attendance was usually off. Since it seemed easier to achieve enlightenment in a single dose, the Alterati decided to convene their entire congregation for a better attended annual symposium, much like this, celebrating the founding of their faith on February 17, 1568. After confronting long reading lists, incomprehensible texts, and suspect metaphors, the depleted Alterati were ultimately rewarded with a sumptuous banquet at the end. Fortunately, as master of ceremonies I recently stumbled upon the actual menu for one such sixteenth-century academic feast—and I’d like to
share it with you as we too dine tonight.

According to the meticulous diaries of the Accademia degli Alterati, the banquet at Florence for a party of twenty-four, roughly half our number, included ten lbs. of grapes (their favorite food in one form or another), forty-eight oversized pears (that’s two each), a random assortment of Etruscan peaches (pitted of course), and no less than eighty-one lbs. of imported strawberries. That comes to five lbs. of fruit per stomach. On top of that, they poured down no less than twenty-one bottles of Greek red wine and three bottles of chianti (totalling one bottle of alcoholic beverage per scholar), plus apparently for a precocious child member, a single bottle of milk. They also tossed in fifteen lbs. of cake flour for a culinary purpose beyond my comprehension.

This then was immediately followed by a hearty meal of twenty-four turtle doves (one each again), six entire legs of veal, a half-dozen wild turkeys, and exactly three capons. They needed ten humongous candles weighing two lbs. each, evidently so they so could see what they were devouring, plus the record plainly shows, seventy-eight lbs. of snow, accompanied by the charming hope of keeping everything that’s supposed to be cold, sort of cold. I think now at this juncture, our comparison to the ancient Alterati of the Renaissance, as well as my speech, should in good taste stop.

And so on that note, I thank you all once again for participating in this implausible venture, trusting at this point that your smiles reveal not only intellectual gratification, but gastronomical as well. Oh yes, I almost forgot: the Altered Ones topped it off, for reasons presumably transparent to us all, with a tub of one hundred fifty prunes—three per Alterato. Let’s hope that’s part of their legacy we can safely neglect.

Finnian v. Columba

There’s an astonishingly charming Irish legend going back to the sixth century about the origins of musical copyright that I’ve saved for my final morning presentation at the end of our Institute. Music as we know was primarily used for spiritual purposes at that time, and its transmission and performance were controlled by monasteries, whose monks painstakingly copied the ancient manuscripts by hand. The year is 567, and the issue is a 6th century psalter, a collection of psalms for chanting in prayer.

Our legend is not only enchanting, but significant as well. It raises questions fundamental to the evolution of musical copyright as a genre of historical music theory, involving the very nature of individual creativity and the larger role of music in society. According to legend, an old Irish monk named Abbot Finnian spent considerable time and effort in his latter years creating a beautiful psalter which his monastery used for chanting. One day, the Abbot’s former disciple, a young missionary by the name of Columba, paid a visit to his aging master in the secluded monastery.

During the early morning song, Columba admired Finnian’s beautiful psalter and its miraculous chants. Young Columba was so moved that late that evening he snuck into the church while Finnian and his monks were sound asleep and copied the manuscript by the flickering light of a candle. Legend tells us that his favorite psalm, as is one of mine, was the 109th of David, with its haunting image, “My adversaries shall be clothed with confusion, and wear their own shame as a robe.”

The story continues that sometime during the night a mysterious stranger was attracted to the flickering glow of Columba’s candlelight in the church. As he bent over and peeked in through the keyhole, he saw the young missionary copying the psalter. But the stranger’s spying
came at a terrible price. While his face was pressed against hole, a hungry crane that the monks allowed to live in the church suddenly swooped down and ripped out his eyeball.

Despite his anguish, the blood soaked stranger ran and woke the Abbot, telling him all he had seen. Finnian and his angry monks seized Columba and demanded that he give back the copy of the psalter, but he refused. And so together they appealed to wise King Dermott, who ruled the Irish kingdom from the great Halls of Tara, not far from Dublin. And this, legend goes, became the first musical copyright case ever.

Finnian charged Columba with making an unauthorized copy of his psalter. Columba’s defense is still familiar today. Unlike Finnian, who was a monk leading a sedentary life in a monastery, Columba was an active missionary who travelled the Irish countryside, spreading the word of God to the people. He copied Finnian’s psalter so he could make it available to the common folk beyond the cloistered walls of the monastery. Why, pleaded young Columba, should Finnian have an exclusive monopoly over such beautiful melodies? Merely because God spoke through him? Did Christ truly want these sacred sounds kept locked up behind sealed doors, under the control of a handful of isolated monks? Weren’t all God’s children entitled to chant them in praise of the greater glory of the Lord Himself?

Abbot Finnian’s case against Columba, on the other hand, is also a familiar one today. He argued that his rights in his own work outweighed Columba’s claim on behalf of the people. He created the psalter with own sweat—even if the inspiration were divine. If his own handiwork weren’t protected, who would bother to do something like this in the future? And didn’t his creative effort also serve God as well? Finnian also argued on a more worldly note that Columba’s unauthorized copy of the psalter deprived his monastery of important economic benefits. Monks from other monasteries often sought permission to copy special manuscripts like this. The privilege of copying was the basis for an exchange of copies or even a commercial charge. Columba’s infringement deprived Finnian’s monastery of lost profits. And who else might next copy Columba’s unlawful copy yet again, further diluting the value of the Abbot’s songbook? Where would it stop?

And so according to legend, King Dermott, deciding the first musical copyright case ever, confronted a fundamental tension in all matters of art and law that we still juggle centuries later. How do you balance the private interests in our personal creations against our collective interests in unimpaired access to information, art, and ideas? How do you balance the needs of the author with the needs of society, and the rights of the individual against those of us all? There was no easy answer for King Dermott back in the sixth century, and none for us now in the twenty-first.

In the end, after forty days of deliberation, the Irish King elected to uphold the fundamental idea of copyright, and that’s why the legend is still told today. He ruled in Abbot Finnian’s favor and ordered Columba to give back the copy of the psalter to the monastery. And his rustic judgment has since become an Irish proverb taught to young disciples as they dedicate themselves to the law: “Le gach boin a boinin, le gach lebar a lebran—With every cow goes her calf, and so with every book goes its copy.”

And thus King Dermott became one of the patriarchs of musical copyright so very long ago, and his judgment has been upheld ever since. Abbot Finnian and his band of monks retained the unauthorized copy of his psalter and prevented the distribution of its ethereal melodies through the green hills of the Irish countryside. Finnian’s monastery gradually became rich and powerful from its monopoly in music kept locked behind sealed doors. According to legend, the decrepit Abbot died clutching his precious psalter in his gnarled hands, now buried forever beneath the crumbling walls of the ancient monastery near Dublin. Young Columba resumed his mission
spreading the word of God to the people, but without Finnian’s psalter. In time, he eventually became a saint. The first copyright infringer in history was a servant of the Lord, guilty of trying to share another man’s creative inspiration with the world in praise of a higher authority.

And what of the mysterious stranger wandering through the night who lost his eyesight to an angry crane? His simple sense of fairness compelled him to reveal his last vision of impropriety—even if it meant accusing a saint. It is he who embodies the spirit, yet the agony of copyright itself.

Thank You Speech

We’re near the end of this remarkable event, and as the recipient of more than abundant praise, I find myself morally obligated to dispel the otherwise gratifying illusion that I somehow managed to accomplish all this on my own. The fact of the matter is, as most of you know as well, we’re all basically cogs in a wheel—and I’m indebted to some very wonderful people whom I now want to take a few moments to acknowledge and sincerely thank.

First off, I’d like to express my gratitude to Jan Miyake, the Administrative Coordinator of the Institute. In case you didn’t know, Jan is talented and promising scholar in her own right. She was a lifejacket that literally saved me from drowning in the whitewater of a voyage as complicated as this. She was adept, thorough, and a woman Friday on every day of the week. Please give both Jan and her husband Josh a round of well-deserved applause.

Second, I speak for everyone in the room when I say it’s high time to thank profusely the absolutely superb faculty of this year’s Institute, Thomas, Ian, Cristle, Sarah, Joel and Tom. There is no question that the success of this program in attracting other outstanding scholars to attend is attributable to the intellectual stature and professional collegiality of you six people. You bravely confronted the daunting challenge of leading workshops before an intimidating group of peers, and you did it with grace, humility, and impeccable expertise.

Beyond that, it is readily apparent to us all that each of you put in hours upon hours of preparatory work in order to make this a truly meaningful educational experience for the rest of us at the Institute. I must warn everyone here that as we solicit others of you to conduct future workshops in your own area of practice, you will be held to the gold standard this inaugural group has set for us today. Without embarrassing you, I’d ask the six scholars of our outstanding faculty to please stand and accept our heartiest applause.

Within their ranks of these six, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Thomas Christensen. From the very outset, Thomas has been the linchpin of this entire endeavor. It was only when Thomas enthusiastically agreed to chair this faculty and solicit colleagues of comparable stature that I knew that whatever else happened, we had the necessary scholarly gravitas to succeed. Thank you, Thomas.

The Mannes Institute is ultimately premised, however, on a single personal relationship that supports everything else, and I’m proud to say it’s between me and my friend—as well as my boss—Joel Lester. Perhaps more than anyone here, Joel is truly a Renaissance man—a prolific scholar, teacher, musician, author, administrator, and colleague. Joel has patience, fortitude, and the abundance of energy necessary to get things done. He worked with me almost every step of the way, sometimes through difficult passages, in order to achieve our mutual goals. What you see here are the fruits of a partnership, pure and simple, between me and Joel, and for that I am deeply grateful.

I’d also like to acknowledge the presence today of our special guest, Bob Kerrey, former U.S. senator and now president of the New School University of which Mannes is proud to be
part. Bob graciously accepted our invitation to see what our field and our new Institute are all about. But that I think tells us something in turn what he’s about too.

Everyone in the country knows that Bob is dynamic and intelligent, but he also has a vision I think that coincides with the goals of our Institute—of a truly new university of the new millennium, as a community of scholars, a gathering place for intellectual exchange and the facilitation of innovative thought. I’m personally honored and excited to be the director of a program affiliated with someone like Bob Kerrey, and I hope in turn that you, Bob, see our Institute as an example of what Mannes and the New School can truly achieve under your leadership.

We also all need to say a blessing for the patron saints of this event, who like the author of the ancient *Dialogus*, remain anonymous. We have the treatise, now we have the Institute, and in the end that’s all that really matters. Perhaps the greatest gift of these generous benefactors is in their anonymity itself, and the message that ultimately it’s our achievements, and not our identities, that matter most.

And finally, I’d like to express my heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you, who decided to trust me by supporting and coming to the Institute. Some of you applied on your own, but for many others I came knocking on your door like a salesman, hawking you to lend your own considerable prestige and professional reputation to help get my buggy off the ground. I won’t single you out by name, but you know who you are, and I for that I am grateful.

And to the entire lot of you, as visionaries, risk takers, Alterati, or just folks like me, who love to think and talk about music, I tip my hat for making this a rich and truly memorable experience that I hope we will not only cherish, but quickly repeat. Thank you again, one and all, members of the Institute.

**Conclusion**

This brings the first annual Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory to an end. It was an incredible experience, and one that I am delighted not only to have made possible, but to have been a part of myself. I thank you all once again for your participation, but moreover, your contribution to its success. Before we disband, I have three matters to take care of.

First, I would like to remind all participants and faculty to please fill our your Institute Evaluation Form in your conference packet if you have not done so already, and either give it to Jan or me, or send it anonymously to us in the stamped envelope provided in your folder. We would like to get as much feedback from you as possible as to what you liked, what worked for you, and what suggestions you might have for improvement in future Institutes.

Second, if you haven’t read the flyer in your packet, I’d like to announce that next year’s program will be a hands-on, practice-oriented Workshop in Schenkerian Theory and Analysis. We’ve already assembled an outstanding faculty of Carl Schachter, Bill Rothstein, Frank Samarotto and other top Schenkerian scholars and practitioners. The workshop will emphasis concrete and applied analytic skills, with additional sessions devoted to Schenkerian pedagogy, philosophy and history.

The Institute is not only designed as advanced study for those already possessing extensive training in Schenkerian analysis, but more so to provide gifted scholars in other areas the opportunity for direct exposure and practical training with skilled Schenkerian practitioners. Applicants with a minimum of one semester Schenkerian analysis generally will be given preference. After the meeting, Jan will have a sign-up sheet for those who wish to receive a
preliminary email announcement of next year’s Schenkerian Institute at the appropriate time. Beyond that, let me say that future programs under consideration include post-tonal theory and analysis, sketch study, and theories of rhythm and meter.

And now, having all survived these past four days of intensive proceedings, it’s my pleasure to drop the gavel on the first annual Mannes Institute this 12th day of June, 2001. By the power vested in me as director of this great and noble enterprise, I hereby call the roll of newly admitted fellows into the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory. As I read your name aloud, kindly come up to receive your official certificate of membership evidencing your affiliation in this august body from this day hence:


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON SCHENKERIAN THEORY AND ANALYSIS

June 27-30, 2002
Mannes College of Music
New York City

Opening Speech

Good morning, colleagues and esteemed members of the second annual Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory, and welcome to New York City. We gather here from all across America—twenty-five different states, indeed from all over the world—ten different countries are represented. Look around you: the Institute is truly international. You are each and every one a distinguished scholar, a thinker about music, joining your peers not as passive listeners to a select roster of papers, but as a true egalitarian community of scholars, an ingathering of like minds for the purpose of collective exploration, collegial interaction, and collaborative discourse. We are here to challenge, intrigue, and learn from each other. Are we elitist? Perhaps, but humbly so, and no more than any convocation of the best and the brightest in other fields. For this, I will not apologize: that is the Institute’s mission.

Still, after the extraordinary success of last year’s maiden voyage, I must confess I was a little apprehensive planning this year’s outing. How can we top our groundbreaking
achievement? My anxiety was only relieved when I accidently stumbled across the words of Yogi Berra, the greatest philosopher to ever come from the Bronx, who wisely cautioned, “If you can’t imitate it, don’t copy it.” And so I won’t, at least not entirely. In any event, only the handful of you joining us again from last year know what the rest of you merely suspect: that we are embarking on an intense, strenuous, all-consuming, and quite remarkable intellectual and interpersonal journey together over the next four days.

You also know that I’ve reserved this early morning time slot to offer daily, and hopefully uplifting catechisms of my own to ease your passage, like morning mocachino before the heavy lifting of the workshops to follow. Please forgive the bully pulpit I guess, but it’s my own modest way to contribute to our efforts on an intellectual instead purely administrative basis. This is not a normal conference, and I am not a normal administrator. After my talk this morning, I’ll have a few brief announcements and simple ground rules about our four days lockdown in this Schenkerian think-tank. But for now, ladies and gentlemen, as they say in Indianapolis, let’s rev up our engines.

Mozart and Lavinia

In Carl Schachter’s final essay on rhythm, he calls the opening movement of Mozart’s A major Sonata, K. 331 “that most overanalyzed piece” and compares it to Lavinia in Titus Andronicus. I confess when I first read Carl’s remark, I had absolutely no idea who Lavinia was, or what on earth she had to do with Mozart. But knowing Carl, I decided I should find out. You all know how this famous piece goes so I don't need to play it. According to Alan Tyson’s study of the number of staves on the single existing sheet of its original manuscript, Mozart composed this piece while visiting Salzburg in 1783. Unlike typical sonatas, the first movement is not in sonata allegro form, but a theme and variations. Based on its simple didactic quality, the lack of intermovement modulation, and the curious use of the soprano clef, Tyson concludes it was essentially a teaching piece that Mozart scribbled down for some Viennese student, perhaps on the stagecoach ride home. The composer takes the barest musical material—a simple tune, sparse texture, transparent form—and reveals his incomparable ingenuity through its masterful manipulation. If this piece is designed to teach, it still does its job.

But Mozart’s little theme is a bit of a conundrum. Even its source is contested. It’s been variously traced to a Czech folk song, a German melody, a Neapolitan Christmas carol, and even a tune by Scarlatti. OK, that’s interesting. But what does all this have to do with someone named Lavinia? Well, since I was—as my daughter says, “totally clueless”—I decided to ask Hedi Siegel, who I figured wouldn’t completely embarrass me if I confided my ignorance. I discovered, as some of you probably already know, that Titus Andronicus is an early and particularly bloody Shakespearean tragedy. Innocent Lavinia, Titus’s beautiful daughter, is kidnapped and brutally raped. The perpetrators then slice out her tongue and chop off her hands, so she can’t identify them or reveal what happened. Her secret remains locked inside of her, so poor Titus, her father, can only guess at the truth. Horrible, yes, but again what does this have to do with K. 331?

It turns out that like innocent Lavinia, Mozart's equally innocent little tune has also been carved up by musical analysts like us, each trying to reveal its secret, yet each with a conflicting account of the truth. Take a look at my handout. Schenker, for instance, analyzes the first four bars as a 5-line from a headtone E on the afterbeat of m. 1, prolonged all the way over to a rapid descent of D-C#-B in m. 4. The downbeats C#-B-A of mm. 1-3 are lower third embellishments
to the upper middleground descent of E-D-C#, which itself is what Bill Rothstein calls an “interior progression” prolonging the E above. Schenker’s location of structural 4 as a fleeting sixteenth note in m. 4 is bolstered by its subdominant harmonic support and sforzando dynamic, with the apoggiatura E as a reiteration of the headtone. As Robert Snarrenberg and Bill both point out, there are two overlapping 3rds unfolded here, a slow but nonstructural E-D-C# over the tonic, followed by a fast but structural D-C#-B over the dominant. Arnold Schoenberg, incidently, notes that the motion from C# up to E in m. 4 is a diminution of the same opening 3rd in m. 1.

But along come Edward Cone and Robert Morgan, who disagree and read Mozart’s little theme from 3 instead of 5, taking the C# as the headtone instead of E. They concur with Schenker that the initial descent in mm. 1-3 is a motion to an inner voice and not a structural line. For them though, the downbeats on C#-B-A is the middleground structure embellished by upper thirds, prolonging C# over to m. 4. This view is shared by Lerdahl and Jackendoff, who hear a 3-line too, but for different reasons since they don’t like the metric displacement of a 5-line beginning on the offbeat E against the tonic downbeat in the bass.

And then enters Allen Forte, who disagrees yet again. Forte casts his vote with Schenker’s 5-line, but unlike the master, interprets the initial motion from E-D-C# not as a middleground prolongation of the E headtone, but rather as the true structural descent from 5 down to 3. So for Allen, its the C# or scale degree 3 that’s prolonged, and Schenker’s structural D or scale degree 4 at the end of the phrase is only an upper neighbor to a prolonged C#. And just as things are beginning to heat up, along comes Joel Lester, who rejects both Schenker and Forte, and allies himself with Cone and Morgan’s a 3-line from C#. But being Joel, he quickly parts company with them too by arguing that it’s the B over dominant harmony in m. 2 which is prolonged across mm. 2-3 as a lower neighbor returning to C# in m. 4, instead of passing down to A within a tonic prolongation.

I think you’ve got the picture. We have, I’d say, a fairly healthy cornucopia of views about what’s going on in these 4 tiny measures of a fairly simple tune— with no consensus at all. Some of our best analysts have torn this little melody apart note by note trying to unlock the hidden secret of its structure, but none agree. And like Shakespeare’s beautiful Lavinia, lacking tongue to speak or fingers to write, Mozart’s innocent little tune can't simply pipe up and tell us what it’s really all about by itself. Like Lavinia, its mystery remains sealed—and like Titus, we are left only to wonder.

Besides learning a bit of the bard, though, Carl’s Elizabethan metaphor taught me something else— something about analysis, about Schenker, and about music itself. And it’s a lesson that’s important to state at the outset of this Institute. I decided that in the end we really ought to care more about music than analysis, and more perhaps about beauty than our own ideas of the truth. We ought to sympathize with music’s analytic fate, even at our own hands, as though the notes we dissect were living creatures, just like Lavinia. Maybe that’s what Carl meant when he told Joe Straus in an interview that he’s deeply interested in Schenker, but more interested in Mozart. And maybe that’s what Schenker is getting at by comparing musical notes to living beings with their own personal destinies—the Tonleben or “life of the tones.” Sure, we poke and prod these little creatures as they scurry across the page, but isn’t it really just to love them more?

Martin Buber wrote famously about his intimate relationship with a tree, but the same is true for music too. Good analysis requires an I-Thou relationship with the notes, treating music as a Thou instead of an It. Now I don’t know if Schenker knew Buber, his Viennese Jewish
contemporary, but I think music was always a Thou for Schenker, and never an It. Schenkerian analysis done right is not some mechanical autopsy of a lifeless corpse, but rather an ongoing dialogue or a dance, maybe even a love affair between analyst and music. And in the end, it celebrates not our own analytic prowess, but the mystery of music itself.

So if we learn our Schenker right—as I trust we will over the next few days—it will teach us less about the hubris of our own constructions, and more about appreciating music as a Thou and not an It. To analyze her, yes, that’s our mission, but never to rape or chop out her tongue. For perhaps like Lavinia, the deepest secret of the simplest sonata, even one scribbled down on a stagecoach, ultimately remains best unknown, indeed unknowable. And like Titus, her father, perhaps we’re always best left wondering. I have a vision of Shakespeare riding with Mozart in that coach to Vienna, guided by a mysterious and mute young woman, under a moonlit night, pondering Schenker’s remark that “where there is no Wonder, there can be no Art.”

Institute Ground Rules

This year the Institute is truly international. We have representatives here from ten different countries, and applicants from fourteen countries. I believe this is one of our most important and exciting tasks as a profession: to unite with our colleagues around the world and learn from each other. And since some of these faces are unfamiliar, I’d like to take a moment to introduce our distinguished and enterprising guests who have braved air travel and come from afar. Would each of you kindly stand as I call your name so others can get to know who you are:

Frank Agsteribbe from the Royal Conservatory of Antwerp and the Orpheus Institute in Ghent, Belgium, a sister organization with which we are exploring a future collaboration, Clemens Kemme from the Conservatory of Amsterdam, the overworked Nicolas Meeus from the Sorbonne in Paris—a familiar voice on the net, Giorgio Sanguinetti from the University of Rome, who graciously hosted me on a recent trip to my favorite city outside of New York, Oliver Schwab-Felisch from the Technical University in Berlin where I hope to be next March, Lasse Thoresen from the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo, Margus Partlas all the way from the Estonian Academy of Music in Tallinn, and of course, our friends the British have landed: We have Nick Cook from University of Southampton as our first international faculty member, Matthew Riley from Royal Holloway University of London, and spanning two continents, our own Bill Drabkin from Southampton as well. Let’s have a warm round of applause welcoming all of these outstanding international guests to the States, to New York, and to Mannes, and do our best to make them feel at home here as valuable and deeply appreciated members of this year’s Institute.

Now I hope you’ll forgive me if I don’t mention our colleagues from Canada, Bill Caplin, Henry Klumpenhouwer, and Bill Renwick, because we know them all too well. I’m truly sorry though that Martin Eybl, a superb scholar who I recently met at the University of Vienna, could not be here, but I assure you Schenker studies are alive and well in Austria too. I would, however, like to introduce one more person, and that’s Timothy Heltzel, an honorary guest at the Institute. Tim of all things—I can hardly believe it—is a lawyer. But despite this infirmity, he also happens to be an amateur theorist, a nice guy, and a knowledgeable Schenkerian. Many of you know him since he has probably attended more SMT meetings and Schenker symposia that several of you here. Tim has brought with him some original archival materials in the Schenker Nachlass, which all of us can examine Friday evening. He has also kindly provided some financial support for this year’s event. So Tim, would you please rise, let everyone know who
you are, and accept our gratitude for your scholarly and financial contribution.

Let me conclude this morning’s coffee klatch with a few simple ground rules to observe during our time together. First, as you’ve probably gathered, this is not a regular conference. In fact, we want to be as different from regular conferences as possible. Unlike other get-togethers, what we encourage is learning through interaction. That means we put a premium on participation. So everyone here is expected to pick up the stick and pitch in by joining the fray. We’re here not just to listen to our faculty, despite their brilliance. The fact is that everyone here is quite brilliant, and it’s collective discourse, dialogue and indeed debate we’re after, not soliloquies. So please, if you’re shy like me, get over it. Second, a corollary to the first. While we discourage passivity, indifference, and bystanding on one hand, we also frown on posturing, pontificating, and grandstanding on the other.

Remember, we’re all teachers here, so we’re all accustomed to leading the discussion. In other words, we’re all required to talk, but also to listen. So please don’t sit back quietly all the time, but don’t monopolize the floor either. Be a team player. A caveat: We want to crank up the discussion, hone in on disputed issues, question our premises, and try to get to the bottom of all this Schenkerian stuff we keep hearing about. So let’s dig in and not hold back. But please, no emotional or personal attacks. This undermines our purpose and mode of discourse. These issues mean a lot to all of us, but more important still is our sense of collegiality and good will. We’re here to challenge, debate, and even provoke, but not to antagonize, mock, or impugn. So let’s make it hot, but keep it civil.

Finally, I mentioned the word “lockdown” in my open remarks and I mean it—sort of. In order for the Institute to work right, you’ve really got to throw yourself into it body and soul, and commit yourself to it while you’re here. What this means is you should eat all your meals here (we’ve already paid for you), be on time to all events, including these morning pep talks, and spend your time and energy with the group. Stick with the program, don’t pick and choose, wander off with a few old buddies for lunch, or skip out to a Broadway show. Over seventy other people eager to seize this opportunity were turned away. Now of course, everyone including me needs some time out to get some fresh air or be alone, so use your judgment. The doors are shut, but not locked. The Institute’s not a prison, but it’s no vacation either. It’s a communal think tank. We’re all here to get something done together, and you’re each an important player on the team. The more you put in, the more you get out. As you’ll eventually see, staying the course has a cumulative effect—like Wagner—so by the finale, you’ll ultimately have the satisfaction that you’ve really participated in and experienced something quite special.

That concludes my morning talk. These 9 am sessions are also reserved for anyone to raise procedural questions, issues or problems along the way. We want this to go smoothly, so if something’s on your mind, now is the time to air it. In addition, please don’t hesitate to corner one of our excellent administrative coordinators at the conference, Phil Stoecker and Eva Sze, both outstanding CUNY grad students who will be busy making us as comfortable as possible while we’re together. Any questions? OK, if not, I welcome you all again, and propose we take a very short 5 minute break before reconvening promptly in this room where Hedi Siegel will kick off our opening plenary discussion on the State of the Discipline.

Honoring Carl Schachter

Excuse me everyone. I’d like to welcome you all to my home and this reception for the 2002 Mannes Institute. If you haven’t already met my lovely wife Nancy, she’s the petite and
effervescent woman bouncing around who looks more like a ballet dancer than a theorist. It’s obvious too that our wonderful caterers tonight, Michael and Josh, are probably not serious Schenkerians either.

But I’d really like to introduce our fabulous pianist, Derek Smith. Derek is simply one of the most talented and experienced jazz musicians in New York. He’s been active on the jazz scene for decades, has played with the likes of Benny Goodman, Dizzy Gillespie, Clark Terry, Ella Fitzgerald, Mel Torme, the Modern Jazz Quartet, and even Luciano Pavarotti, and was the pianist on the Johnny Carson Show with Doc Severinson for several years. I heard him play a week ago and was shall I say, “blown away.” As musicians ourselves, I trust you all appreciate, or in my case, envy his astonishing improvisational skills and elegant musicianship. It’s an honor really for us to have him with us tonight. I think there’s a lot we can learn from him, and a lot more we can just plain enjoy. So please let’s “give it up” as they say for Derek Smith.

Now, back to business. There’s an old Hasidic tale about a young Talmud student who wants to find out which of his teachers is the greatest of them all. One day he approaches the oldest rabbi in his village or shtetl and asks, “Rabbi, tell me who is the greatest Talmud scholar you know? There are so many different teachers, each with his own personality, method, and ideas, how can I tell which among them is truly great?” The old rabbi looked at the student, and replied in Talmudic fashion, “Who do you think it might be?” The student ponders for a moment and then says, “Why it must be Rabbi Nachman of Minsk. He has the fullest, whitest beard of all, and he looks so very, very wise.” The old man gazed back at the student and said nothing. Somewhat uncomfortable, the student exclaims, “Well then, it’s Rabbi Zalman of Pinsk. He’s always lost in study and has no time for little things. Surely he must be the greatest Talmud scholar of all.” Again, the old rabbi looked back at the student but said nothing. Growing more frustrated, the young student blurted out, “Ah, surely then it must be Rabbi Mendel of Kiev, because he is so sure of himself, always talking and explaining everything to his students.”

Once again, the old rabbi looked back and said not a word. Finally, after a few minutes of silence, the old man quietly asked, “And why do you not mention Rabbi Eliezer of Chelm?” Taken aback, the young student retorted, “Rabbi Eliezer? He walks stooped over, with rounded shoulders, and his head bent down. How could it be that such a man is our greatest Talmud scholar?” The old rabbi looked back, paused for a moment, and said, “It is because by walking stooped over, with rounded shoulders and a bent head, only he leaves room for the feet of God.”

We are blessed to have such a man here among us—a great scholar not of Talmud, but of music. He is someone who has taught me and many others not only to understand music, but to love it in the deepest way possible. We learn not just from what he does, but from the way he does it. He is a model for what a music scholar should be: he has placed himself in the service of the Muse. He is a great man, because despite his profound wisdom, or perhaps because of it, he always leaves room for the feet of God. Carl would you please come up here?

Carl, I know you have jet lag, but you’re still largely the reason I’m here today. Over eight years ago I walked sight unseen into the middle of your classroom quite unannounced, told you I was a lawyer who studied music, and that I hoped someday to study with you. You were analyzing something by Chopin. You invited me into the room and told me to sit down and listen. When you finished, you asked me if I understood. I said yes, not completely sure I did. You smiled, and like the old rabbi in the story, said nothing. I knew then and there you were someone very special, but I never imagined how much you would influence me. One day early in my studies with you we took a bus together after class to the Upper West Side. I was thrilled to have the opportunity to finally be alone with you, with no other pesky students around. I was
sure you would use this special occasion to reveal some great hidden secret about music that you were saving just for me. But instead, to my surprise, you told a few off-color jokes, and then asked me whether I knew of any good bargains at the new Filene’s Basement that had just opened in my neighborhood.

Gradually, as my studies progressed, I became frustrated because I now realized I would never have the musical knowledge or skill you possess. I called Joe Straus and told him I ought to quit and go back to law. What was the point of continuing? I’ll never forget what Joe said. He told me, “Wayne, don’t you realize that everyone feels this way around Carl?” Some time after that, I found myself together with Carl in some distant airport down south. We were both returning from a conference, and discovered we were on the same flight back to New York. As you were checking in, something went wrong with your ticket, and to my chagrin some officious ticket agent gave you a rough time. You eventually worked it out, but I was sorry to see the anxiety he caused you. Summoning my most derisive courtroom demeanor, I sauntered up to the counter after you, glared at the unruly agent, and disdainfully muttered, “Don’t you have any idea who that is?” So I guess, Joe, it’s not exactly everyone who feels this way around Carl.

This year Carl you’re celebrating your seventieth birthday. It’s an appropriate occasion to honor you, particularly here among such outstanding scholars and peers. With great admiration and personal gratitude, I’d like to present you with this gift on behalf of the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory and its members, a facsimile of the Waldstein Sonata that I brought back for you from Vienna, and a piece that plays a central role in our studies together this weekend. For me, the original score dispels the stereotype that Beethoven always struggled over every single note. Here, at least, he worked quickly, with little revision, and a sure hand. In any event, please accept this gift as a small token of appreciation from all your friends, colleagues, and students, old and new alike, including those who are learning from you for the first time here at the Institute—for teaching us how to think about music, how to love it, and above all, how to always leave a little room for the feet of God.

Welcome to New York

Before I begin this morning’s talk, I’d like to say just a few words about where we are. Mannes is a very special place. It’s not just the birthplace of Schenker studies in America, but a jewel among music schools, as our Dean, Joel Lester, has so aptly put it. Mannes is that rare hybrid that seriously tries to combine musicianship with scholarship, intellect with intuition, and theory with practice. It has not only graciously given the Institute a home, but me a home as well. We all owe Mannes and Joel especially a debt of gratitude and round of applause, for hosting the Institute and having the vision to help make something this wonderful a reality. I hope our relationship will continue to grow in the future.

But I also mean something else in referring to where we are, and that’s this city, what we New Yorkers call the Big Apple, and I must say something about it too. Paris may be prettier, Amsterdam a little hipper, London more refined, and Rome, well, more romantic. But none have that one characteristic that makes New York so extraordinary, and that’s its vitality. It’s that vitality, that raw energy, that causes creative things like this Institute to sprout up on this little island.

And please forgive me if I’m maudlin, but New York’s vitality is something that no fanatic could ever destroy. New Yorkers won’t allow it. Only 9 months ago, as I huddled together with terrified students and teachers in this very room, it seemed inconceivable that another gathering
of distinguished scholars from all over the country and the world could take place here within the
time it takes a baby to be born. Your being here today is not only a feather in cap of this
wonderful school, but a tribute to our irrepressible city, its character, and in the end, its enduring
vitality. As one who truly loves the Big Apple and lives off its energy, I am grateful to all of you
for that alone, and proud to contribute to it myself in this very modest way.

Thinking Like a Lawyer

I get a kick telling people like you that the greatest theorist of the twentieth century went to
law school like me. It also helps me explain why I spent so many years being a lawyer. But the
more you think about it, Schenker’s legal training must have had some impact on his intellectual
development. It did mine and every other law student I know. You see, you don’t just study law
in law school. You learn a certain way of thinking, a mental process commonly known as
“thinking like a lawyer.”

Take a look at today’s handout: it’s Schenker’s law school transcript at the University of
Vienna from 1884 to 1888. The inescapable truth is that young Heinrich took over thirty high
technical courses in law school over four years—which not one of you neo-Schenkerians did,
except for Tim Heltzel, and he’s not a practicing theorist. So that just leaves Heinrich and me.
And how many law-trained Jewish music theorists do you know? So what’s the meaning of this?
Is it simply musicological trivia, an archival curiosity that has nothing at all to do with us or what
we do, or why we’ve come from all over the planet to talk about Schenker? Let’s examine.

Now most of you nonlawyers imagine law to be a set of rules telling you exactly what you
can and cannot do. You have what I’d call an overly vivid sense of the law’s determinacy. You
tend to magnify its rigidity and exactitude, misconceiving law as dogmatic, unambiguous
algorithms decisive of every social situation. As a result, you probably think of legal training as
inducing a kind of exaggerated rule-orientation and authoritarian fixation on regulatory precision
at the expense of the sensitive contextuality and creative fluidity you non-lawyers have. And
those of you who see Schenker in this unduly rigid way might even diagnose the roots of
Schenkerian orthodoxy in his overexposure to legal indoctrination.

But now I’ll let you in on a dark secret: anyone who has actually studied law, like Schenker,
Tim, or me, soon discovers the exact opposite is true: what one first imagines to be black and
white quickly fades into shades of grey. The lawyer’s untold secret is that the law is almost never
clear. In fact, it’s usually vague and inclusive. Legal pedagogy is a paradox: while it provides
grounding in systematic generalization and respect for rules, it simultaneously exposes the
uncertainty of those very rules and the rhetorical power of persuasion. It induces a deeper
appreciation for law, but a skeptical awareness of its limitations as well.

This is very similar to Schenkerian analysis. In each instance, the nonpractitioner naively
exaggerates its orthodoxy, certainty, and rigidity. Don’t most non-Schenkerians misconceive the
Ursatz as some sort of musical straightjacket, embodying a code of authoritarian rules
mechanically enforced by legalistic practitioners to the point of stifling musical imagination?
Students first exaggerate the rigidity of Schenkerian analysis, and are later disappointed they still
have to make decisions. In time they realize not how systematic, but how wonderfully pliant our
method is.

The same holds true for law. The layman exaggerates the certainty and overdetermination of
law just as he does Schenkerian analysis. Contrary to both stereotypes, the lawyer like the
Schenkerian is really the only one to realize how plastic and indeterminate their craft actually is.
Thinking like a lawyer is not some slavish, deductive application of formulas any more than Schenkerian analysis is. They are both dynamic and flexible interpretative practices requiring sensitivity and discretion. It’s only the layman who view each axiomatically. Schenker’s legal training likely exposed him to law’s plasticity as much as its structure, and its demand for interpretation within a normative framework. The mode of thinking he encountered was not mechanical or dogmatic as the nonlawyer presumes, but rather adaptive and contextual, honing his sense of analytic judgment and rhetorical imagination. Far from inducing intellectual rigor mortis, Schenker’s legal education may have bred a finer appreciation not only for rules, but for their creative application as well.

Unlike the more abstract and speculative thinking of Kurth, Schoenberg, or Riemann, the legal character of Schenker’s approach further resides in its practical, heuristic orientation toward concrete resolution. Its application of rules whose musical authority is logically derived from theoretical premises is legalistic in the sense that it is designed to generate a persuasive musical adjudication that precludes opposing determinations and disposes of a specific analytic situation. Schenkerian practice, like legal practice, is a mode of pragmatic decisionmaking. Like the lawyer’s brief, an analysis is less concerned with pontificating some nuanced epistemological truth than arguing a reasoned solution to a practical problem. The Schenkerian’s goal, like that of the attorney, is not to ruminate about abstract theoretical possibilities, but to advocate a conclusive disposition of concrete musical facts.

Yet another law-like aspect of Schenker’s approach is its hierarchical conception of musical levels. Other than the military, few things are as hierarchical as law, and Schenker was surely exposed to such hierarchical thinking in law school. His hierarchical organization of music parallels the pyramid of statutes, ordinances, and regulations governing hierarchical tiers of jurisdiction in a legal system. This congruence is readily apparent from the jurisprudential work of Hans Kelsen, Schenker’s Viennese contemporary and the leading continental legal authority of the twentieth century. Kelsen’s Grundnorm at the apex of the legal structure from which secondary proscriptions emanate recursively throughout a jurisdictional hierarchy directly parallels the Schenkerian Ursatz and its propagation on secondary jurisdictional Schichten below.

But mostly importantly, I think it’s Schenker’s ability to generate a set of practical constraints that provide sufficient structure while retaining sufficient flexibility that is the residue of his early legal training. During a formative intellectual period, he was exposed to the paradox of indeterminate legal reasoning. He learned, in other words, how to think like a lawyer. As a student of law, Schenker undoubted discovered the importance of rules for stability and predictability. But at the same time he also discovered their limitations and contextuality as well.

And it’s that dynamic synthesis of rules with flexibility, that integration of structure and freedom—dare I say, between Stufe and prolongation—that makes his contribution so significant. For unlike the layman, who only sees the Ursatz, like the law, as a straightjacket, the true Schenkerian, like the true lawyer, understands the paradox of liberty within limits, and of creativity within constraint. I suspect Schenker may have discovered this paradox of ordered freedom, or what Hans Weisse called “lawful freedom,” while he was in law school, and specifically from Georg Jellinek, one of the leading jurisprudential scholars at the University of Vienna with whom Schenker studied legal philosophy, but also from other influential professors, such as Anton Menger, Lujo Brentano, and Robert Zimmermann. A dedicated Germanist seeking to rediscover the native roots of German law prior to its Romanization, Jellinek postulated a medieval Teutonic state where the competing demands of social organization and individual
differentiation were in perfect equilibrium. His ideal of Teutonic law represented in his words, “a correct legal comprehension of the relation between the state and the individual,” balanced between the extremes of excessive social control represented by ancient Rome and excessive personal autonomy represented by modern democracy.

And it is this same synthesis, this jurisprudence of equilibrium between collective order and individual freedom, between whole and part, conformance and differentiation that governs Schenker’s community of musical tones, guiding without dictating, channeling without confining the dynamic relationship between the melodic will of the individual tone and the communal harmonic law of the collective. Schenker’s society of tonal citizens is in fact a tonal microcosm of Jellinek’s Teutonic state, balanced between a musical Rome and a musical democracy. And note this: Schenker’s musical state is regulated not by natural or acoustic laws, like the laws of physics or biology, but by socio-musical ones, resembling as Schenker says, “a constitution, regulation, or statute.” These mirror the laws of society, not of nature. “Tone are as living beings with their own social laws,” explains Schenker, each as “an individual with rights and obligations, governed by law and moved by freedom.”

For Schenker, a musical masterwork is much more than a mere passive reflection of the tension between order and freedom in human society. It is actually an encrypted legal code, a tablet, dare I say a Torah, for deciphering the ideal resolution of that fundamental dichotomy. Music theory is thus a form of jurisprudence, and analysis a call to social action. As Nick Cook put it, for Schenker “the works of the masters are practical manuals in social understanding, object-lessons in the achievement of unity by contrast, demonstrating how individual differences can be reconciled with social cohesion. Analysis becomes a means to a better society through the balancing of these apparently incommensurable demands.”

And in fact, this very reconciliation of authority with autonomy, order with originality, and creativity with compliance at the heart of Schenker’s theory of music has always been the highest ideal of jurisprudence, dating back to Aristotle’s conception of a mixed government between Athenian freedom and Spartan control. This in turn is the moral of the Ursatz, that mottoed sharing of sameness, but in different ways. And this is also the greatest lesson Schenker learned in law school: that the law, like the Ursatz, does not stifle freedom, but safeguards it. “Creating under the irresistible constraint of the Urlenie,” he writes, paradoxically perhaps to those unschooled in law, “the great masters nevertheless felt completely free.” And surely it’s no coincidence that another law-trained musician, Igor Stravinsky, expressed this same paradox when he said, “the more constraints one imposes, the more one becomes free,” or that Goethe, who was similarly schooled, concluded that “only a limit enables a form to rise to perfection” and most eloquently, “the law alone can give us freedom.”

But in the end, I prefer the more colorful words of that great American lawman, Wyatt Earp, sheriff of old Tombstone. Like Schenker, Earp understood the symbiotic connection between law and freedom, but in a world of cowboys instead of chords. After the bloody shootout at the OK Corral back in 1881, Earp was accused of excessive brutality in enforcing law and order in the Old West. The crusty old sheriff is reported to have paused and replied, “It’s the horse’s reins, my friend, that allow it to leave the stable—and this here six-shooter that lets you whistle Dixie.”

_Banquet Speech_

I apologize for speaking so much, but I was especially looking forward to saying a few
words at the banquet tonight, and wish to thank Bill Rothstein for giving me this opportunity. I struggled to come up with something intelligent to say after all this intensive Schenkerian analysis, but it was only when I had a chance to make a pilgrimage to Schenker’s grave in Vienna a few weeks ago that I found my answer. Standing next to Schenker’s plot, or I guess right on top of it, it occurred to me that if I actually had a chance to meet him this weekend, I’d rather do it here at the banquet, over some steak and beer, rather than in some heady workshop discussing music.

You can find Schenker’s body at gate 4, group 3, row 4, grave 8 of the Jewish section of the central cemetery in Vienna. It’s one of those places where even dead Jews can’t intermingle. What’s amazing though is that unlike the famous graves of Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, and Brahms, which are all clustered together on celebrity row, you wouldn’t know Schenker’s tombstone from the other folks around him. There he is, just stuck in the mud among a bunch of indistinguishable markers, more precisely wedged in between Benjamin Rappaport and Bernhard Wachstein. Sounds like Yahrzeit at my synagogue, the prayer for the dead: yisgadal v’yiskadash shemei rabbah, in the name of Benjamin Rappaport, in the name of Bernhard Wachstein, in the name of Heinrich Schenker, in the name of Shleumi Menker. But unlike my seat in synagogue, there’s happens to be a very nice tree right in front of him. And he has a much better view. When I asked the ladies at the cemetery office where I can find Schenker, they had no idea who he was. Even after I explained he was the greatest theorist of the 20th century, I still think they though I was looking for my uncle.

But what impressed me most was that, unlike Mozart and the other big-shot cadavers, Schenker’s grave seemed like the valhalla of a real person, an ordinary Joe who actually lived and moved on, just like poor old Rappaport and Wachstein. And there he still was, just 6 feet under, right in front of me. It was eerie, with the wind blowing in the trees, no one else around, I mean no one else who was more or less alive. What dawned on me was that I knew a bunch about Schenker’s ideas, but not too much about the actual guy whose grave I was romping around on. And I don’t mean his life story either, but his personality, who he was as a man. What was Heinrich like as a person?

Compare him to other celebrities in our field. We know, for instance, that aside from composing the Rite of Spring, Stravinsky liked to watch cartoons and eat at Horne & Hardart’s. And it’s easy to picture Schoenberg jotting down a combinatorial hexachord, and then flubbing a backhand to a more dapper Gershwin on the other side of the net. Or how about Webern with those weird round spectacles stoking up a Cuban after dinner—an unusually bad habit in his case [a soldier thought it was a gunshot, and killed him]. I can picture Berg stealing off to meet a secret lover under the moon, and then desperately rubbing balm on some nasty insect bite he picked up along the way. And who doesn’t shed a tear imagining poor Bartok with towels wrapped around his noggin to block out traffic before dying half starved only a few blocks from the luxurious Fez?

But other than a bunch of theories, graphs, polemics—the real banquet of our Institute—what do we really know about Herr Schenker, this guy stuck somewhere in a box in the Viennese dirt between Rappaport and Wachstein? What about the man himself, his habits, likes and dislikes, his style and demeanor? Was he really just a cantankerous old pill like my Uncle Harold from Detroit? What was he like say shuffling around the house in his slippers after pancakes on a Sunday morning, or late at night slouched on the couch with his chubby wife? What did he consider a good time? Did he like to shop? Go bowling? Was there a sense of humor here, a flair say for ties? What was his favorite color? His best meal? Did he like to ski? Study Talmud? Did
he ever toss on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt like me? Could he tell a funny joke or know a do-able diet I might try for a while? Hey do you think this guy could cha-cha any better that me?

These are the kind of things I’d secretly like to ask old Heinrich, not just further cross-examination about some prolongation in Brahms or an unsupported stretch of Scarlatti. They’re the kind of things I might get away with after a couple of beers in the Fez Room, but not in a lofty workshop over at Mannes. I want to humanize this guy, put some real flesh and blood on that cold Ursatian skeleton, and bring him down to earth or maybe up from the earth along with the rest of us. I’d basically just like to schmooze with Heinrich a bit on a playing field that’s a little more level and a bit more real than music theory, where he’s holding most of the cards in a poker game where he’s the dealer. I think that might eventually help me understand more about his ideas too, how he sees things, and where they come from.

And in the end, that might help me know more about music, and perhaps myself, and maybe even why I found myself standing alone by his grave by that tree in Vienna, the one that’s not in my synagogue, with the wind blowing between Benjie Rappaport and Bernie Wachstein, and why I’m standing here now with folks like you, sharing an experience like this. Wouldn’t that be enough?

The Card Players

Just so you know I wasn’t kidding last night about Schenker’s grave, I’ve handed out copies of the handwritten record at the office of the Central Cemetery in Vienna, showing exactly where Schenker is buried, right between Messrs. Rappaport and Wachstein. I didn’t want to you think I made that up.

One June afternoon a few years back, maybe even to the day, I invited Carl Schachter out to lunch at the Stanhope Cafe, a posh eatery across from the Metropolitan Museum over on Fifth Avenue. I rarely venture to the East Side—it feels like Europe to a Westsider—but this was a special mission. I had just finished taking Carl’s class analyzing Mozart’s piano concertos, and wanted to compensate him for my consistently flawed graphs by treating him to a fancy meal. Carl and I talked about Schenker while we dined. I had come to feel he almost knew Schenker personally, and in a way had introduced me to him too. I tried to imagine the three of us sitting at the embroidered tablecloth in the Stanhope. I felt I had invited both of them actually to my little celebration across from the Metropolitan that afternoon.

Our conversation eventually turned to Mozart. The fact is, I didn’t really love Mozart until I met Carl. He was too subtle. Mozart for me was an acquired taste. Now I think that’s the most important thing Carl ever taught me—how to love Mozart—even more than how to analyze his music. Anyway, our conversation gradually broadened to include Tchaikovsky too. The previous year we analyzed the 4th Symphony, with that spectacular brass introduction composing out a diminished seventh chord. It was incredible to apply Schenkerian analysis to a massive work like that. I started to appreciate the power or better the grandeur of prolongation. I recall reading a letter by Tchaikovsky where he called Mozart the “musical Christ,” and regretted that in his own music, unlike Mozart’s, one could always tell, as he put it, where the “seams” were.

At some point during the chocolate mousse I suppose, Carl suddenly questioned whether atonal music might be a sort of musical heresy inevitably doomed to failure, because it artificially suppressed our natural tonal instincts. He compared it to communism’s futile denial of a belief in God. Carl knew at the time I was also studying post-tonal theory with Joe Straus, and specifically told me not to repeat this to Joe—so I didn’t, and I won’t. I just sat there and stared
at Carl across the table. I couldn’t tell whether his remark was reactionary or radical. Around that time I was struggling to finish a string quartet I was composing in a dissonant modern idiom. But studying Schenker with Carl changed my views not only about music of the past, but about my own compositions as well. I became confused about what was important and in a sense, inevitable or universal in music, even my own. I didn’t know what was conservative or progressive anymore. I couldn’t tell whether Carl was a curmudgeon or cutting edge.

Schenker’s unfashionable faith in tonality seems to have acquired new relevance in the postmodern era, like the refurbished churches sprouting up all over post-soviet Russia. T.S. Eliot, another traditional radical, once observed that “in art, any more than the rest of life, we can’t live in a perpetual state of revolution.” Maybe the atonal revolution of 1911, like the Bolsheviks’ in 1917, was finally over and tonality and God had both survived after all. What if, as Brian Hyer put it in what I think is the best essay in Thomas’s new History of Music Theory, news of tonality’s demise, like Mark Twain’s, was premature? Anyway, on that provocative note, Carl thanked me for lunch and left me alone in front of the museum. Lost in thought, I wandered back across Central Park over to the West side. I never mentioned Carl’s remark to Joe or anyone else, until today. But I added a key signature to my quartet.

Some time after that, my daughter Tess became obsessed with Vincent van Gogh. She’s the only twelve-year-old I know who has a shrine of Van Goghs clustered around her bed. I’ve never worried about her chopping off her ear really, but on one occasion we counted them just to be sure. Anyway, one birthday I bought Tess an unsuitably mature volume of Van Gogh’s complete works, which now resides in my study, and not her shrine. It was there that I came across this remarkable observation by D.H. Lawrence. “Van Gogh’s earth,” he said, “was still subjective, himself projected into the earth. But Cezanne’s apples are an attempt to let the apple exist objectively on its own, without transfusing it with personal emotion.” And here’s the line I like best: “Cezanne’s great effort,” wrote Lawrence, “was to shove the apple away from himself.”

I was fascinated by Lawrence’s image of “shoving the apple away,” and “letting it exist on its own.” This idea of objective distance rather than subjective transfusion in art seemed to capture not only the essence of Cezanne, but of Mozart as well. It’s this sense of personal disengagement I think that makes both of them so subtle and in that way difficult, compared say to Van Gogh or Tchaikovsky, whose personal emotion so heavily transfuses their content. I decided to take another field trip over to the East side again, back to museum, in search of Cezanne’s apples to see if Lawrence was right.

I found the apples, little fleshy round balls sitting silently on a table. They seemed to be more about a fascination with form than fruit. Unlike Van Gogh’s emotionally infused cornfield and crows, they indeed appeared to exist entirely on their own, as if no human being had actually painted them, as if they had existed in some apriori, eternal, timeless state. Eventually though my eyes wandered over to the next painting along the wall—it’s my favorite Cezanne of all—the picture of the card players. I’ve loved this painting for as long as I can remember. I count it among my dearest friends. Staring at the card players, Lawrence’s insight fresh in mind, I was suddenly struck how calm and aloof the three men at the table suddenly appeared. They all had that same emotionless expression of detachment you see on those ethereal faces in Piero della Francesca centuries before, just like the three bystanders in his Flagellation of Christ, benignly impassive before the suffering of Jesus himself.

Lawrence was right. Cezanne had shoved not only the little round apple, but even humanity away from himself. There on the mask-like faces of these three cardplayers was true objective distance and Mozartean restraint, not the transfused subjectivity of Van Gogh or Tchaikovsky.
Somehow Cézanne had come full circle back to della Francesca. So what was the Frenchman then—like Schenker—radical or conservative, cutting edge or curmudgeon?

I wandered out of the museum, mystified by my own befuddlement. Crossing over Fifth Avenue I found myself once again in front of the Stanhope. I suddenly recalled my lunch with Carl long before and our discussions about music, communism, and heresy. Now though I tried to imagine Mozart and Tchaikovsky eating there instead of me and Carl, the graceful Viennese calmly explaining to the tormented Slav that if one’s melodies are too overwrought, their seams inevitably show, and that if he could only shove the notes away from himself, like an apple, he could regain Piero’s ethereal repose. But eventually my thoughts drifted back into the Metropolitan. I now imagined these two great composers playing cards together, sitting expressionless at Cézanne’s wooden table instead of the embroidered Stanhope across the street. And I pictured Schenker as the third cardplayer in the painting, the one anchored calmly in the middle, holding his cards with the same poker face of detachment Lawrence had so wonderfully detected.

But as I wandered home across Central Park again back to the West side, I suddenly remembered there’s actually a fourth person in Cézanne’s painting—a lone figure standing off to one side, just like Christ in Piero’s Flagellation, back in the corner, arms folded, quietly puffing a pipe, wearing a bright red scarf. Perhaps it’s the artist himself, an observer of his own work, shoved away not only from the apple, the cards, and the table, but away from the painting itself by literally putting himself in it. But then again, maybe it wasn’t him after all. And why not someone else? Crossing the park and turning the key in my front door, it occurred to me how much I wanted to be there too, that lone figure in the Cézanne, off to one side, back behind the cardplayers, with the red scarf, standing quietly, just to watch them play.

Thank You Speech

Before we start our closing plenary session, I’d like to take a few moments to dispel the gratifying illusion that I’ve accomplished all this on my own, and thank some extraordinary people who helped make this extraordinary event possible. First off, I’d like to express my gratitude to Phil Stoecker, Eva Sze, and Jan Miyake, the Administrative Coordinators of this year’s Institute. They are all talented and promising scholars in their own right who performed yeoman service in assuring that everything has gone smoothly. Jan is in China, but please give Phil and Eva a round of well-deserved applause. Second, I think it’s high time to thank our absolutely superb faculty, Charles, Bill, Frank, Matthew, Nick, Robert, Hedi, and David. Am I forgetting anybody? Oh yes, and Carl. There’s no question that the Institute’s success in attracting outstanding scholars like you is attributable to the intellectual stature of these fine people. They bravely confronted the daunting challenge of leading workshops before an intimidating group of peers, and did it with grace, humility, and impeccable expertise.

Beyond that, it’s self-evident that each of them put in hours of preparation in order to make this a truly meaningful educational experience for us all. I must warn everyone here that as we solicit others of you to conduct future workshops in your own areas of expertise, you’ll be held to the same gold standard this remarkable group has set for us today. I’d therefore like to ask the nine scholars of our outstanding faculty to please stand and accept our heartiest applause. Within their ranks, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Bill Rothstein. As chair of this year’s faculty, Bill helped me organize this event conceptually from the ground up, selecting the faculty, working with me to select the participants. Bill, to say the least, is one the brightest stars on the
Schenkerian horizon. But he brings other important qualities to an event like this: a steady hand, open ear, inexhaustible patience, tireless dedication, and sound judgment. I relied on all of them. And though I suspect we may have stylistic differences when it comes time for him to approve my stillborn dissertation, we are all deeply indebted to him for helping me stay a steady course in this endeavor. Thanks, Bill.

And finally, I’d like to express my heartfelt appreciation to each and every one of you for coming to the Institute. This is a pivotal moment in the history of Schenker studies—it’s a first. It’s never been done before, and whatever it means, it means something important, and you helped make it so. So to the motley lot of you, I tip my hat for taking the plunge, doing the work, pushing yourself through this, and making it a rich and truly memorable experience that I think we’ll all cherish for many years to come. Hear, hear. Now that we’ve complimented ourselves, let me turn the floor over to David Gagne for our closing plenary discussion on Schenkerian Pedagogy.

_Closing Ceremony_

It’s time to bring the second annual Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory to a close. This was an incredible experience, and one that I’m delighted not only to have made possible, but to have been a part of myself. I thank you all once again for your participation, but moreover, your contribution to its success. This is a group effort, and we all did a good job. Before we disband, I have four matters to take care of.

First, I’d like to remind everyone to fill out your Institute Evaluation Sheet in your conference packet and send it to me in the stamped envelope provided in your folder. Please share your feelings and reaction to the Institute. If you enjoyed and were stimulated by this, please take the time and effort to let the people who have made this possible know they we on the right track. Second, if you don’t already know, next year’s 2003 program will be an Institute on Transformational Theory and Analysis, and I’m thrilled to say that David Lewin himself plans to be here and participate in all of the workshops. We’ve assembled another brilliant faculty of Rick Cohn, Joe Straus, Henry Klumpenhouwer, Bob Morris, John Roeder, and Ed Gollin.

Beyond that, we’re already planning the 2004 Institute on Musical Form, led by yet another distinguished faculty of Bill Caplin, Janet Schmalfeldt, and other authorities in that field. Each year a different topic will be presented, which requires a core group of scholars working in a particular area sufficient to form a faculty. Future topics under consideration are rhythm and meter, jazz theory and analysis, critical studies, and sketch analysis—and I’m open to any other suggestions as well. Third, I’d like to ask each of you, and particularly those from Europe and abroad, to go home and tell your friends and colleagues about our Institute, and encourage them to join us in the future. The purpose here is to establish greater communication and collegiality within all aspects of our profession, and to give serious scholars in all locations a meaningful opportunity to talk to each other. The Institute is truly a gift bestowed upon our entire community, and we should all take advantage of it.

And finally, having all survived these past four days of intensive proceedings, it’s my pleasure to drop the gavel on the second annual Mannes Institute this last day of June, 2002. By the power vested in me as Director of this great and noble enterprise, I hereby call the roll of newly admitted fellows into the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory. As I read your name aloud in groups of six, kindly come up to receive your official certificate
evidencing your participation in the 2002 Institute and your affiliation in this august body from this day hence:


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON TRANSFORMATIONAL THEORY AND ANALYSIS

June 18-21, 2003
Mannes College of Music
New York City

A Community of Scholars

Good morning members of the third annual Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory, and welcome to New York. We’ve gathered here from around the country, indeed around the world. Twenty-three different states and eight different nations are represented. You are each a distinguished theorist, coming together with your peers not as a passive listener to a select roster of papers, but as true participants and contributors in an interactive think tank. This is an egalitarian community of scholars, an intellectual democracy whose goal is collective exploration, inquiry, and debate. We’re here to challenge, intrigue, and learn from each other through an unfettered exchange of hypotheses, experiments, doubts, and discoveries.

The Institute is celebrating its third year. Our start-up stage is over. The Institute is now a reality. Some people have called it the most important innovation in our field since the founding of SMT over twenty-five years ago. We’re changing the way we interact with each other. We had nearly eighty applicants this year, and Schenker drew even more last year. Our programs for 2004 and 2005 on Form and Rhythm are already set, and the groundwork is being laid for 2006 and 2007 on Chromaticism and Schoenberg. From what I hear, SMT in its own way is trying to clone the Institute as well.

The Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory is an independent and privately supported entity that is currently housed at Mannes College of Music. As its Dean, Joel Lester
asked me to welcome you all to the school on his behalf, since he’s attending his daughter’s wedding today. He hopes to attend other sessions during the Institute as his schedule permits.

Only the handful of you joining us again from previous years know what the rest of you merely suspect. We’re about to embark on an intense and strenuous journey together over the next four days. During that time, I’ve reserved these early morning meetings for a few thoughts of my own, generally of a lighter nature to ease you into the heavy lifting of the workshops. Please excuse this indulgence. It’s not intended to be self-serving, but rather a way for me to structure this event and set its tone in a personal as well as administrative way. This morning I have a just a few remarks and ground rules about our four day lockdown in this transformational think tank.

The Institute is truly international. Some of your faces are unfamiliar, so I’d like to take a second to introduce a few of the newer members of our community. Would each of you newcomers please stand for a moment as I call your name so others can get to know who you are: Moreno Andreatta from IRCAM in Paris, Tiina Koivisto from the Sibelius Academy in Finland, Thomas Noll from the Technical University of Berlin, Michael Russ from the University of Huddersfield England, and Michiel Schuijer from the Amsterdam School of Music. Let’s have a warm round of applause welcoming all of these outstanding international scholars as participants in this year’s gathering.

There’re two people in particular I wish were here. The first, of course, is David Lewin. From the outset this event was designed to engage David’s remarkable achievement and its progeny in a way that would be truly meaningful to him as well as to us. I corresponded several times with David throughout the fall. This gathering of so many distinguished scholars is ultimately a tribute to him, and despite his great modesty, I know he was deeply honored. We’ll devote our plenary session tomorrow afternoon to sharing our thoughts and reflections about David as a friend, colleague, and teacher, and are privileged to be joined by his wife, June, their son Alex, and our special guest, Milton Babbitt.

There’s one other person I wish were here too in a way, and that’s Kevin Korsyn. Kevin has written a provocative book that I’m sure some of you have read called Decentering Music: A Critique of Contemporary Music Research, and its something I’d like to take a few moments to reflect on. Kevin cites what he calls a “crisis of discourse” in music theory resulting from the increasing institutionalization of our field. This crisis is manifested he says in the paradox of growing fragmentation, fractionalization, and intolerance on one hand, and increasing conformity, standardization, and lack of dialogue on the other. In the face of what Kevin calls the “monologic discourse” of conference papers and articles, he makes a plea for decentering our profession through a more dynamic and interactive mode of discourse in what he calls an “open community of scholars.”

I think Kevin’s diagnosis is largely correct. The old ways of doing business are getting stale and counterproductive. Conferences no longer serve the scholarly function they perhaps once had. They’ve become more like academic showcases or intellectual trade shows rather than sustained learning environments. They have the breadth, but not depth. Professional politics, rivalries, and ambitions consume too much of our scholarly energy. Opportunities for interactive discourse at a sustained and high level are increasingly rare.

Kevin’s critique is on point, but I don’t think its a sufficient solution, nor do I suspect does he. Moreover, I fear he’s overlooked one particular remedy staring us right in the face, and that’s the endeavor we’re embarking on today. The Institute is precisely the decentered community of scholars Kevin and so many others seek. Other than my morning chats, there are no real
extended monologues here. Our discussions, as Kevin wants, are dialogic and decentered. Our floor is permanently open. We welcome debate, disagreement, and controversy. We tolerate and encourage diversity of opinion. There’s no power structure here, no subtext of academic politics or institutional rivalry, no hierarchies or cliques. Our sole focus is learning, with no hidden agenda. We may not be utopian, but we sure try to be.

Kevin says he “imagines new forms of community among musical scholars, and new types of negotiations among their discourses that can accommodate radical disagreements.” I think we’re the closest thing to that. Kevin says we need “an ethical transformation that will make us more capable of accepting and nurturing otherness.” That’s precisely our mission. Kevin says he wants “free and open discussions in which equality among the participants prevails, and tolerance for individual differences is respected.” I’d say that’s what the Institute is all about.

I’m not so deluded, of course, as to imagine that our long weekend together can singlehandedly overcome the deeper crisis Kevin accurately discerns in our profession. But I do think it’s remarkable that the Institute anticipated Kevin’s critique, and is validated by it. This is just the type of scholarly community that Kevin and so many of us long for. Ironically, it has not gone unnoticed in Kevin’s book, but by Kevin himself.

Now let’s turn to a few simple ground rules that I’ll ask you to observe during our time together. First, as you’ve probably gathered by now, this is not a traditional conference. In fact, we want to be as different from traditional conferences as possible. The modality here is dialogue, not monologue. We’re all here essentially as students, and our teachers are our peers. We learn through interaction, and that means we need everyone to be involved.

We’ve come not just to listen to our faculty, but to each other as well. It’s collective discourse, dialogue, and debate we’re after, not soliloquies. It’s neither fair nor in the spirit of things to take up a spot here among so many competing applicants, and then sit back, soak up the camaraderie and quietly enjoy the show. Regardless of your background or expertise in this particular area—and I assure you it can’t be shakier than mine—I’m asking each and every one of you to roll up your sleeves and actively contribute what you know, what you doubt, what you don’t know, what you question, and what you want to know. If you’re shy in front of people, which knowing most of you I truly doubt, I suggest that now’s a good time to get over it.

The second rule is a corollary to the first. On one hand we discourage passivity and bystanding. But at the same time, we also frown on pontificating and grandstanding on the other. In other words, we’re all required to talk, but also to listen. So please don’t sit back quietly all the time, but don’t filibuster or monopolize the floor either. Give others a chance, and keep in mind the red lights and green lights.

One caveat. Transformational theory is fair game here, open to criticism, and even reasoned attack. We don’t want to just slap it, David, and each other on the back. So let’s dig in and not pull any punches. We want to understand this methodology, but also critically assess it in an open and fair way. We want to crank up the discussion, hone in on disputed issues and challenge our premises. But please, no emotional or personal assaults. This undermines our purpose and mode of discourse. We’re here to question, debate, and even provoke, but not to antagonize, belittle, or impugn. So let’s make it hot, but keep it cool.

Finally, I mentioned the word “lockdown” a bit earlier and I basically mean it. In order for the Institute to work right, you each need to commit yourself to it fully while you’re here. That’s the price of admission. What this means is you should eat all your meals together except as noted, be on time to all events, including breakfast and these morning meetings, and direct your entire time and energy toward the whole group.
Stick with the program, don’t pick and choose, sleep late, or wander off with a few old buddies to a bar or Broadway show. Our social interaction here is as important as our mental interaction. We’re strengthening the collegial bonds of our profession, so you need to come to the lunches, the receptions, the banquet, the plenaries, and everything else. In short, nothing is optional. What you want to do is throw yourself completely into this process for 4 solid days so it becomes intense. And this heightened intensity can only happen with a collective infusion of energy from all of us together. If you drop out or pull back mentally or socially, that total energy dissipates for everyone else.

So even though the front doors aren’t locked, they are closed. The Institute’s not a prison, but it’s no vacation either. It’s a communal think tank that requires total immersion. We’re here to accomplish something together, do a job, and you’re each an important contributor to the team. The more you put in, the more we all get out. As you’ll gradually see, staying the course has a cumulative effect. So by the end, you’ll ultimately have the satisfaction of having participated in and created something quite unique that none of us will ever forget.

Now aside from my pep talks, these morning meetings are also reserved for anyone to raise procedural questions, issues, or problems along the way. We want this to go smoothly, so if something’s on your mind, now would be the time to air it. In addition, please feel free to approach one of our administrative coordinators, Heather Feldman and Eva Sze, both outstanding CUNY grad students who are helping make this happen. Any questions?

OK, so I welcome you all again, and propose we take a short 5 minute break before reconvening in this room to begin our opening plenary session on the evolution and context of transformational theory. As you can see on your schedule in your conference packets, we’ll go all morning and after that we’ll have lunch together upstairs on the 3rd floor. We’ll begin our workshops this afternoon. Don’t forget that tonight after the workshops is the reception at my house, which as you can see on your map also in the packet is only a few blocks away. And as I said before, everyone should definitely come because spending our social time together helps ease the barriers between us so we can think more freely together. There’s also free food.

I’d just like to close my remarks this morning by returning for a moment to Kevin’s book. He ends his critique with a postmodern parable that is a fitting way to kick off our Institute. Three scholars seek out an oracle to discover the essence of music. But the oracle says the truth is, there are no oracles. One scholar says, ”what shall we do now?” The other replies, “maybe it’s time to leave the temple.” The first asks, “but what will we do without the oracle?” To which the third responds, “perhaps we could start by talking to each other.” That sounds like a good idea. So let’s do that too.

Reception Speech

If I could please have everyone’s attention for a moment, I’d like to make a brief announcement. Let me welcome all of you to my home, and warn you not to open any doors or cabinets, because they’re crammed with everything we had to stash away to create the illusion that we’re neat. This is the one party we have all year, because it takes about that long for us to clean it up.

For those of you who haven’t met her, my daughter’s name is Tess and her friend’s name is America. Tess studies ballet and piano, and goes to the hardest school in the city so I can’t do any of her homework. My older daughter Sophie also plays piano and is away this summer at the Houston Ballet Academy. Her homework is even worse. If you happen to stumble over a brown
dog it’s Lucy, who’s a rare breed called a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, perfectly suited for Manhattan where we have no ducks. Our Siamese cat, Satchel, is in charge of the entire upstairs. The only person he hates more than Lucy is me, so I doubt you’ll have the privilege of meeting him.

The person we’re all indebted to for this lovely reception each year is my wife Nancy. I’ve not said anything about her at past Institutes, and it’s long overdue. Nancy’s a professional ballet teacher and works with the best dancers in the world from the American Ballet Theatre, New York City Ballet, Dance Theatre of Harlem, Ailey, and all the Broadway shows, not to mention foreign companies like the Kirov, Bolshoi, and Berlin Ballets.

On any given day you can find a number of luminaries in her class, including Barishnykov, Julie Kent, Vladimir Malakhov, and my favorite, Diana Vishneva, who’s probably the greatest ballerina since Makarova. Nancy guest teaches all around the world in distant lands like Japan, Brazil, Switzerland, and Germany. She also knows a great deal about music, since her father was a violinist in the Boston Symphony and her brother is executive director of the Pittsburgh.

So as you can see, I’m very proud of Nancy as a wife, a mother, and an artist and teacher in her own right. Each year she not only puts up with 50 awkward and out of shape music theorists, but makes our apartment a warm and comfortable place to be. What we both love about the Institute most is the opportunity to personalize it with our own tastes and values, and I couldn’t do this without her. Nancy makes the Institute feel like a home, and it’s that intimacy that makes it special.

So please introduce yourself to her somewhere along the way tonight. There’s no chance she’s going to ask you to explain what a hexatonic pole or voice-leading parsimony is, so you needn’t be afraid of that. So, on behalf of all the members of this year’s Institute, I’d like to present you with this small gift as a token of our gratitude, a book of Degas’s drawings of dancers, two of which are already on our wall. Can we all give Nancy a round of applause?

Other than that, I welcome you all once again to our house and hope everyone has a good time. The food by the way is from Zabar’s, so you’re all official New Yorkers now anyway—maybe even Jewish—at least in body if not mind. If you haven’t done so already, please be sure to make your mark in our guest book over there on the little writing table near the floor lamp so later we’ll know you’ve been here.

And finally, if it’s not too late already, I implore you not to leave your mark in a less palatable way by spilling anything on our brand new and distressingly overpriced furniture, an infraction that would surely jeopardize the likelihood of any further Institutes in the future. Nancy and I enjoy this event enormously, but hey, we’ve got our priorities.

What’s in a Word?

In preparing for this year’s Institute, I found the topic of transformation a little hard to write about in the somewhat lighthearted vein I’ve used in the past. The first year’s Institute on Historical Theory was so new I had plenty to say, and last year’s Schenker Institute was a piece of cake. I do have certain ideas about T-theory, though not many I’m willing to share with people who’ve written articles about it like you. But what I thought I might get some mileage out of is the word itself. Why transformation? Did David just pick it out of a hat?

We’ve heard of transformation before of course, in music and out, but David christened it as the name of an entire approach. So I started thinking about this etymologically, linguistically as a word, what it says and it’s implications. I also wondered why this word might be any better or
worse than any other one meaning more or less the same thing. I never got a chance to ask David how he picked this word, but why “transformation?”

David of course didn’t invent the word. He may have been influenced by Chomsky’s transformational grammar, which appeared around 1957, where an input syntactical structure converts to an output via some transformational operation. Chomsky’s deletion transformation, for instance, eliminates certain elements from the input, while his permutation transformation reorders its elements. Chomsky’s transformations operate on multiple syntactical levels from deep structure to surface structure in a Schenkerian sort of way.

Milton Babbitt used the word transformation even earlier in a musical context in his 1946 dissertation, “The Function of Set Structure in the 12-Tone System.” In his opening chapter called “The 12-Tone Set and its Transformations,” he describes inversion, retrograde, and retrograde inversion as musical transformations. Babbitt distinguishes these from transposition, a lesser operation he calls a translation. Translation never seemed to have caught on, and remains available if someone here wants to run with it like David did with transformation.

But even before Babbitt, Schenker used transformation in 1935. In Free Composition he calls linear progressions transformations of the fundamental line, which he says unfold on different transformational levels. Schenker also refers to the transformation of the dissonant passing tone into a structural consonance through the acquisition of harmonic support. Oswald Jonas later used the term transformation in a footnote to the 1955 edition of Free Composition, referring to the chromatic alteration of the dominant third in the minor mode. Despite these precedents though, David’s work is certainly the principle thing musical associated with this word. So why did he pick transformation?

Let’s consider the alternatives. Transformation basically means change, and there’re a lot of nice words I could imagine using instead. Even change itself might have worked. I know in one article where David analyzed Babbitt’s Music for Four Instruments using Boolean algebra, he comes flat out and calls the different transformations “changes.” I found that refreshing actually. As far as I can see, transformation theory, pretty much like all music theory, is about how things change.

I can’t remember whether it was Schenker, Schoenberg, Adorno, or maybe all three, who said there’re only one of three things that can happen when one event follows another. B is either the same as A or different from A—these are the two uninteresting extremes—or B is somewhere in between: it’s similar to A. B repeats some aspect of A and replaces another aspect of A. In other words, B changes A. That’s what music theory’s all about. What we call structure is simply similarity, pattern recognition, which is a complex form of repetition. That’s the only way we have of making sense of anything. Otherwise, everything would either be constantly new and in that sense unrecognizable, or constantly the same and in that sense indistinguishable. To Babbitt’s famous remark, “do it once, it’s an accident; do it twice, it’s structure,” I’d merely add, do it too many times, it’s meaningless.

Calling this stuff change theory instead of transformation theory might have worked, but that’s pretty blunt and unimaginative, which is the last thing David was. Besides, change theory sounds like your changing theories instead of advocating a theory of musical change. Plus, jazz musicians have already taken this word, since they’re busy making changes all the time. So in the end, change won’t work for us.

The next word that came to mind is that old standby, the all purpose “variation.” Variation has been around of course for a long time. It’s an extremely useful and important word, with impeccable musical credentials. Friedrich Neidt used it in his Musical Guide back in 1721, with
a footnote explaining what variation meant because the term apparently was so new at the time. I think one of the reasons T-theory can be applied to so many different kinds of music is because it’s really just about variation, and variation is the bedrock of all music. So why not variation theory instead of transformation theory?

But variation is too old and weighed down with prior associations. It doesn’t sound like a new theory hot off the press as it was in 1721, but a retread of an old one. Plus it’s not scientific or mathematical sounding enough either. Even musicologists toss the V-word around like a frisbee. Theorists need a label that has a clinical, antiseptic ring, like we’re working in a lab.

Variation is too user friendly. It sounds more like a compositional tool than an analytic technique. It’s something that a composer does to music, rather than something an analyst finds hidden beneath the surface. We like transformations because you’ve got to dig deep and discover them the old fashioned way. You’ve got to earn it.

Variation and transformation also don’t swap easily. I can’t imagine the Goldberg Transformations or Transformations on a Theme by Haydn. We want there to be transformations in these pieces, but they need to be different from the variations the composer has in mind. So variation’s out the window too.

The next word I came up with is alteration, as in Generalized Musical Intervals and Alterations. But again, the word’s lugging around a lot of extra baggage. Chromatic alterations have been around since the flat sign was invented. And even though Jonas called them transformations, that suggests that the unaltered form is normative and not a transformation itself, which some of us don’t particularly like about flat signs, tonality, or Jonas.

Besides, finding alterations in music sounds a bit too much like a tailor. I can’t picture Rick explaining Neo-Riemannian alterations in Parsifal, like he’s letting out the seam of Wagner’s pants. By the way Rick, what do you charge for a pair of LP cycles—with cuffs? On the other hand, at one point in Rick’s paper on Hexatonic Poles in Parsifal, he does refer to “having the girth of his investigation taken out a little bit at the waist.”

Anyway, alteration’s out because I came up with a better and more scientific word: mutation. Mutation theory has a nice organic ring to it. It’s also creepy enough to scare away musicologists and composers. But there’re problems here too. Sometimes we like to identify a musical object with a shortened form of the word. So in transformational theory we not only say that X is a transformation, but a “transformation” of Y. A note can be looking for, even longing for its inversional partner or I-transform. I just can’t see calling some poor F# a “mutant” like it was the Hulk lurking around in the viola clef somewhere.

Besides, mutation is even older than variation, since the medieval theorists called hexachordal modulations mutations. Back in 1317 Marchetto defined mutatio as a sort of pivot, a change he says in the name of a note with the same pitch. What’s interesting is that he contrasts mutatio with per-mutatio or per-mutation, which is a change in the name of note with a different pitch, showing the link between permutation and mutation. The Latin prefix “per” connotes through, by, or across, suggesting a sort of swap or exchange. Marchetto by the way seems to be the first theorist to use the term permutation in music, which in the long run is a more significant contribution that the older but now arcane mutation. Mutation’s a cool word, but I think probably its day is done.

While we’re on cool though, there’s no doubt that the all-time coolest label in post-tonal theory, maybe even all music theory, has got to be the Klumpenhouwer network. When I first heard this term I had absolutely no idea what it was. For that matter—with all due respect to Henry—I had no idea there was, or even could be an actual person named Klumpenhouwer.
Everyone I grew up with had a name like Schwartz, Levi, and Kornstein, or in this crowd, Cohn, Caplin, and Straus—you get the idea—though on one occasion I did become unusually familiar with a girl named Priscilla Humperdinck in summer of my junior year back at Mumford Public High in Detroit.

Anyway, I’m still not 100% sure what a Klumpenhouwer network actually is, and I’m even more mystified how you go about getting one named after you. I’m sure it’s not too easy. The word sounds more like a Klingon fuse box than anything else. I especially loved using it to explain to my ditsy Aunt Harriet in Detroit what this Institute is all about, just to confuse her more than she already is—if that’s conceivable.

By the way, if you haven’t had the opportunity of flashing K-net terminology around your aunt or your dentist or someone in the quote real world who has no idea what we do to begin with, you’re in for a special treat. Whatever else David accomplished, he has immortalized Henry’s surname in a way that surpasses anything else since the Alberti bass.

So far though none of my alternative labels for transformation theory seem to have worked. The last thing I could come up with is really pretty lame and that’s metamorphosis theory. I know it’s dumb and turns David into Kafka. And given the quantum of music we usually analyze these days, like the succession of notes between two chords, or even within one, it’s pretty hard to call them metamorphoses. They’re really more like mini-morphoses, and I’m sorry but no one wants to call this stuff minime theory.

So, the fact is that transformation really is the best word for this sort of thing after all. It’s got everything going for it: it’s new, scientific, and says it all. It also has a nice short form, transform, which has the added grammatical benefit of being both a noun and a verb. Transformation even has word “form” hidden inside it as a subset, no doubt proving a mystical connection to the topic of next year’s Institute.

But the best thing about this term is that it contains the prefix “trans” from the Latin, meaning through or across, like transportation. It’s like Marchetto’s per, as in per-mutation. The word transformation itself encapsulates David’s breakthrough idea of not just looking at things, but the motion in between them. So really the meaning of transformation is not just change, but moving through something, across a space, like a transatlantic voyage. It’s like that little picture at the beginning of GMIT, showing that an interval is itself a motion or transformation from one note to another.

David’s great icon is the arrow. It points somewhere across a space, transporting us from one place to another. And that’s why transformation does the job. It moves trans-form, or across the form like an arrow. Without demanding semiotic precision, the word itself is a sign, one of Peirce’s iconic representations. It’s linguistic structure encodes its meaning, and it shares a form with its subject. How many words in music or anything else can say that?

Of course, transmogrify also has the “trans” prefix—but that’s got to be a step backwards, along with mutants, minimes, and metamorphoses. And it’s a bit too ghoulish—although after staring long enough at the hyper-hexatonic system, and it’s demonic offspring, the power tower, cube dance, and of course, everyone’s favorite, that old chicken-wire torus—well, I confess for one to feeling somewhat transmogrified.

Anyway, when all’s said and done, I decided that David knew exactly what he was doing when he chose the word transformation. It didn’t just fly out of a hat, or if it did, it was just the right fit. And I guess if you really understand that word and what it means, and compare it to the alternatives, then you probably have a pretty good idea what we’re talking about here. At least that’s how I explained it to my ditsy Aunt Harriet from Detroit—just to confuse her more than
she already is—if that’s conceivable.

David Lewin in Memoriam

Welcome everyone to our special plenary session in honor of David Lewin. Even though David isn’t with us, we all know that he is the heart and soul of why we’re here. I know he wanted to come very much, not as the main attraction, but simply as another participant in the larger work of the Institute. Some of us were David’s students, other his colleagues, some just his readers, and others his friends and closer still. But there’s not a person in this room, I daresay in our entire profession, who was not his admirer, and who wasn’t touched by him and his remarkable mind and spirit in a deep and profound way.

We’re privileged to have David’s lovely wife June here with us today, along with their son Alex and Alex’s girlfriend Cathy. We’re also honored to have probably the only other person to fully understand and appreciate the depth of David’s work, our colleague and David’s dear friend Milton Babbitt.

The format of this special gathering will be quite informal, somewhat like an open mic Quaker meeting. I have a short story I’d like to share about the first time I met David, after which I think it would be appropriate to offer Milton a chance to speak. I leave it open to June and/or Alex to share their thoughts, if they would like, towards the end of our session after they’ve had a chance to hear how much David meant to us.

After Milton talks—assuming he has something to say—I propose that anyone who wishes can come up and share whatever they like about David, their personal or professional relationship with him, his work, his influence, what he meant to them, or anything else. I’d just ask that you keep it relatively short, say no more than 5 minutes each, so that everyone has a chance. You’re on your own for dinner tonight.

Being so wonderfully modest and never wanting to be the focus of anything, I suspect what will transpire is probably contrary to what David would have wanted were he here. And if he was, we wouldn’t do it. But circumstances have unfortunately changed. It’s not out of disrespect for David that we diverge from that agenda, but because we have our own need to express our own thoughts and feelings as a community, pay tribute to one who has meant so much, and achieve greater perspective for both the many gifts he has bestowed, as well as the loss we now sustain. David might not have preferred that were he alive, but I’m sure he would understand it now that he is gone.

In terms of what each of us says, I’d only ask that we be tolerant of the manifold ways in which different people express themselves. Some may be more personal, others more professional. As long as it’s authentic and genuine, to me that’s the only guideline here. As for the order of who talks when, I’d like to leave this open and flexible, so you’ll just have to sense when there’s an opening and defer to each other without a moderator. If that gets too confusing, then I’ll simply call on people who express a desire to talk. I hope this is acceptable to everyone. So let’s begin.

I presented a paper several years ago at a New England conference on minimum aggregate partitions in Babbitt’s string quartets. I was nervous enough, since it was one of my first presentations, but all the more so when I saw David and Bob Morris paired together in the front row like two great danes guarding the academic citadel from newcomers like me.

When you don’t know someone who has a big reputation, it’s pretty hard to act natural. I’ve
seen better scholars than I get tongue tied around Carl Schachter, who’s easy for me ever since he asked me about sales at Filene’s Basement. Allen Forte became demystified when he suddenly needed me to help him out of a legal jam. Bob was never a problem actually, since I knew him when his beard was black in the early days at Yale when I was the only law student with the blue mimeos auditing his class. Even Milton himself became a little less scary after we argued about imported beer at a diner somewhere down south.

But David was a different kettle of fish. I didn’t know him from Adam. He was shy and I was petrified. When I finished my paper he asked a question, more like a statement. I nodded my tacit assent. After the session though, hoping to unwind, I instead unexpectedly found myself standing right next to him—at no place other than . . . a urinal.

Someone could write a history of the role of the lavatory in human affairs. It’s occupants suddenly share an inappropriate intimacy, a suspended animation, stepping out the matrix as it were, unplugged momentarily from their normal roles and thrust into an olfactory democracy, an egalitarian world of detached bodily functions, and then just as abruptly thrust back again into the social mix.

Standing alone next to David was like getting unplugged from the matrix. Before those porcelain thrones, the fact that he was a famous theorist and I to the same but inverted degree completely unknown, was suddenly trivial. For what seemed an eternity, our mutual need to relieve ourselves became the great equalizer. We were just two guys staring at the wall. We stood there as brothers performing a frothy duet, a Cagean polyphony of intermittent streams, he the dux, I the comes. Even then I figured David heard contrapuntal dribbles and piddling relationships I could never imagine.

I once argued an important case before the supreme court in New York. I was nervous as my cross-examination of the defendant was about to begin, I a young lawyer, and he a savvy and quite crooked businessman. Sensing my discomfort, the judge benevolently called a 10 minute recess. I found myself at the urinal standing awkwardly next to the defendant himself.

Nothing was said. We were out of the matrix: two guys reading graffiti and nothing more. In that moment, I suddenly saw him as a simple human being, someone’s father, and not the evil demon I had summoned in the course of battle. I reentered the courtroom and he took the stand. I was no longer afraid. I knew this man now and saw his humanity. I slew the demon, and won the case.

My reverie with David was shattered by sound of grating zippers. We sealed our pact by washing without a word. The hand dryer was our coda. Then the door flew open. The bubble burst and we reentered the matrix. David resumed his role as the preeminent theorist of our time, the innovator of an astonishing idea that has changed the way we think. And I resumed my own role as a newcomer, a refugee from the courtroom who curiously changed careers in the middle of his stream.

I sat alone in the corner, admiring David from afar, surrounded by respectful colleagues, bushytailed students, and anyone else courageous enough to approach him without suspecting his gentle modesty. I reflected on our moment of urological isography, like a secret only we two shared, which I’ve cherished ever since. I was no longer afraid of David.

Who’s Speaking Anyway?

A few months ago I ate dinner with Charles Rosen. I had given a paper at the New York AMS meeting that afternoon about the salutary influences of Schenker’s legal training on his
musical thought, something I seem to have made a minor career of lately. I’ve spent the last year putting myself through the 19th-century German legal education I imagine Schenker received, with the hope that it might make me a sharper theorist too.

Ironically, it was only long after I stopped practicing law that I actually began to study it intellectually. Although the musical payoff is still waiting to accrue, I have managed to become a bit of an expert—at least to the extent that I’ve been appointed a fellow of the Florsheimer Center for Constitutional Democracy and will be teaching a course in Continental Jurisprudence and the Western Legal Tradition at Cardozo Law School next year. It made me feel a bit like Al Pacino. Just when I thought I had gotten out, they sucked me back in.

Although I’ve read all of Charles’ books, I’d never met him in person and had no idea who he was. When I finished my paper, this overweight bald guy lit into me and ranted about all the negative influences law had on Schenker, and presumably by inference, on me as well. It was a triple-barreled attack: anti-Schenker, anti-lawyer, and anti-me. I concluded he must be some crackpot musicologist and fended him off as best I could, searching the room for backup from others who had suffered similar guerilla attacks. Scott Burnham, our panel chair, didn’t throw me a life-jacket, and later sympathetically confessed that it would have been futile anyway. I was in the grips of vintage Rosen.

Later that evening, by sheer happenstance I found myself at a high-falutin’ dinner party at Richard Kramer’s house along with Scott, David Cohen, and a few luminaries like Maynard Solomon, and of course Charles. I was hoping to meet Sigmund Levarie, whose insightful remarks about Plato had given me and Rick something interesting to correspond about, but he never materialized. It was probably just as well. Charles commandeered the entire event from cocktails though dessert. Somewhere during the entree though, I began to realize that his assault wasn’t personal. This guy’s a walking, talking, opinionated encyclopedia of music and just about everything else. After a few more glasses of red, I actually began to like him in a way, and see him in a charming and almost endearing light.

Rosen is charismatic and very entertaining. He told one joke about a terrorist who hijacked a plane, grabbed a stewardess and demanded, “take me to Detroit.” The stewardess said, “that’s where we’re going.” I didn’t tell Charles I’m originally from Detroit.

Charles is also wise. The high point of the evening came after he entered a prolonged and almost catatonic silence for nearly 8 seconds, and then suddenly burst out in a total nonsequitur, “Paul Valery wanted to find out where ideas came from, so he asked Albert Einstein. Einstein said he thought best while walking in the woods. Valery replied, ‘so you carry a notebook to write down your ideas?’ Einstein laughed and said, ‘no, no, ideas are very rare.’”

Valery on the other hand was famous for jotting down ever single idea he ever had in a running notebook, all 29 volumes of them. He called them “acts of the mind,” occupying an intermediate realm somewhere between pure cognition and physical action. Incidentally, this practice of keeping drafts, notebooks, and sketches apparently arose during the Renaissance, not just because paper became more available, but because of the new interest in thinking as a creative process, rather than the older medieval conception of merely transmitting authoritative ideas.

Charles’s story about Einstein reminds me of something Morton Feldman said 25 years ago. I knew Feldman, as well as John Cage, Christian Wolf, Xenakis, Crumb, Earl Brown, Lukas Foss, Reich, Riley, La Monte Young, and a lot of other composers back in the 70’s. It was an exciting time back in those days, because anything seemed possible, musically or otherwise. The boldest experiment had to be tried, and any vestige of convention came under pitiless scrutiny.
Xenakis was an unusual man. He was very handsome, but had a terrible facial wound. Half his jaw was blown away in the war. Someone had criticized Xenakis by saying that his music was ugly. Feldman replied, “you should be so ugly.”

Feldman once said you’re lucky if you have just one original idea in your whole life. He knew Xenakis had achieved that, whether you like his music or not. I think Steve Reich, who’s still my close friend and who’ll be at the Institute in 2006, also had an original idea. No matter what anyone says about Steve or his music, I’ll always admire him for his original idea and his ability to see it through.

But Feldman was more of an artist. In fact, he was probably the most artistic person I’ve ever met. Feldman’s idea is harder to describe because it’s more an experience than a principle. Feldman was fond of quoting Clement Greenberg, the great exponent of abstract expressionism, who said, “what counts first and last in art is quality. Ideas and all other things are secondary.” It’s that aspect of Feldman’s music that I admire most: its essential aestheticism, premised upon the fundamental irrationality and uncertainty of artistic creation, that anathema to music theorists. Feldman prioritizes prerogative over principle, intuition over intellect, sensibility over system, autonomy over artifice, and choice over concept. He enshrines Rousseau’s remark as a credo, “Je ne pa d’systéme.”

Rousseau long ago attacked the mendacity of all systems, transforming their external authority into the internal authority of the self. Feldman insisted on the right to be personal, even esoteric. He composed directly in ink, on the conviction that if one truly concentrates, there’s no need to revise. The result is an improvisatory and fragmentary sound world he called “Webern without the intellectual baggage,” a music more of the ear than the eye, the heart than the mind. Its artistic justification and compositional rationale is not structured compliance or theoretical consistency with an objective and normative standard, but rather the existential act of aesthetic choice and subjective will, a sufficient basis unto itself, embodied in Cage’s insufficiently quoted remark, “they go together, because I put them together.”

I recall an incident that captured Feldman’s profound aestheticism and showed me how deeply rooted it was in his own being. Morty—everyone called him Morty—invited a bunch of us over to his house one night for dinner. I remember the Rauschenberg on the wall that Feldman bought for $16 before either was famous. At some point, he got up and lumbered into the kitchen to make salad dressing. After he had disappeared for about 20 minutes, I followed him into the kitchen to see what he was doing.

On the shelf was a huge collection of tiny vials containing various oils and spices. This enormous guy with coke bottle glasses was hunched over a small mixing bowl, carefully siphoning out minute doses of various condiments, all without a measuring cup, which he stirred slowly into the mix. It felt more like a laboratory than a kitchen. I was struck how much it was like his music, adding a pinch of muted trombone to a snippet of snare drum, followed by a dash of viola pizzicato.

When we eventually sat down to dinner, I was eager to see what Feldman’s concoction would taste like. But when I finally took a bite of Morty’s salad, I could barely taste anything at all. After about 5 more bites, I had some vague, ephemeral sensation of a faint, subtle flavor I’d never tasted before. It’s my culinary memory of Morty’s vinaigrette that captured his aesthetic for me, and my tastebuds that helped me understand his conception of art more than anything else.

When I assess my own creativity in this vein though, in terms of Einstein’s comment about the rarity of ideas and Feldman’s claim that you’re lucky to have even one, I tend to feel I’ve
come up short. I find most of the music I write fairly derivative—though I prefer to call that postmodern—and my theoretical work, as well as much other, at times uninspired. Einstein’s right: original ideas are exceedingly rare, and in the end, to quote Valery again, I admire what I can’t do myself.

Maybe the best idea I’ve stumbled across is this Institute. It just seemed to happen by itself, the right thing at the right time. People in our field want to come together in a smaller groups and relate in a more intense and collegial way. For me, that feeling has something to do with the 70’s as well. It’s the same mood we had back then, searching for a greater sense of social interdependence and authenticity. Still, the Institute’s basically just a logistic or procedural idea, not a substantive or artistic one.

But when I ask myself who among us has come up with a truly significant original theoretical idea, it’s not that I don’t admire each of you enormously, but the list gets pretty short. In fact, I probably wouldn’t even include the person I’ve learned most from, Carl Schachter, but it would include Allen Forte and Milton Babbitt. Before that you’d probably have to go back to Schenker and Schoenberg, and then Rameau. But there’s no doubt about one person on the list, and that’s David.

I was thinking about David and his work when I recently read Foucault’s essay, “What is an Author?” I’m sure you’ve all heard the news that the author is dead and the text is now an interpretative document in the mind of the reader. The fact is, when we analyze a piece of music we really don’t care too much about the composer. We don’t view the score as evidence of someone’s intentions, but as an independent interpretative text of its own. Our focus is on what we can do with the piece, not what the composer did. The piece is an object, divorced from the author, and it basically doesn’t matter who wrote it.

But that’s yesterday’s news. The new news, for me at least, is that Foucault carves out an important exception to the death of the author for someone he calls a “founder of discursivity.” This is a person who discovers an entirely new and different mode of discourse, an original way of looking at things. The examples he gives are Freud and Marx. Founders of discursivity don’t just create a particular text with particular content, they create an operational or procedural mode of discourse that then allows other people to express their own ideas within it. They’re not just authors of their own works, but of new ways of thinking. They’re a little like transformational networks I guess, channeling the discourse in a certain direction, while our lesser work forms interchangeable nodes somewhere within their intellectual circuitry.

David was one of Foucault’s founders of discursivity. He discovered a new approach, a different way of thinking about music allows the rest of us to flow through his network. Like Freud’s idea of the unconscious, Marx’s idea of economic materialism, or Schenker’s idea of the Ursatz, David’s idea of transformation, captured in the icon of the musical arrow, is simple, general, and capable of endless elaboration. It’s like a hammer; you can build what you want. But to come up with that idea, that hammer, as Einstein said, is very rare. And you don’t need a notebook to jot it down when that kind of idea comes along.

For Foucault, founders of discursivity like David are the only real authors left. They define a mode of discourse for the rest of us, who look like authors but are really just speakers in the language they created, users of their hammers, filling in our own nodes connecting arrows in their conceptual network. And as to us, Foucault cites Samuel Beckett, who says, “what does it matter who’s speaking anyway?”

Beckett’s words have increasing resonance in our postmodern, post-authorial academic community. The voice of possessive individualism, the cornerstone of scholarship since the
Enlightenment, is becoming outmoded. There’s a medieval scent of a new communalism in the air. And our Institute is at its cutting edge, renouncing intellectual egoism in search of a higher group mind, stirring our thoughts together in Feldman’s salad bowl, utilizing a collective consciousness to create a new taste that none of us could imagine alone, each the anonymous contributor of their own ingredient.

So maybe in that case then the Institute too is itself a mode of discourse. Perhaps it too is a network of sorts, in which we ourselves are human nodes, transforming how we interact as people and scholars. And maybe that makes me a founder of discursivity too. And maybe here at least, without reminiscing about the good old 70’s, we can activate all these different transformations: Rosen’s jokes, Valery’s notebooks, Einstein’s walk, Feldman’s vinaigrette, Rousseau’s credo, Foucault’s discursivity, and Lewin’s arrow, with a dash of Xenakis, a snippet of Rauschenberg, and a pinch of Reich, and whip them all together in a tumbler to discover more about music, spice up our field, and in the end, maybe even transform ourselves.

And then if we’re lucky enough to come up with just one idea along the way, perhaps one original idea we can all call our own, well then in that case, as Beckett said, what does it matter who’s speaking anyway?

Banquet Speech

First of all, I’d like to thank everyone who made this event possible—especially the bartender.

There’s a certain irony in my organizing a conference about something as highbrow and esoteric as transformational theory. I feel a little like Rodney Dangerfield when he got out of the hospital. Someone asked him why he had brain surgery and he said, “because my wife thinks I’m dumb.”

I guess if you asked me why I started this Institute, I’d say it’s because I’m dumb, and this is the easiest way for me to get smarter, short of brain surgery.

My brother’s even dumber. He works in a bank. Got caught stealing pens. During the civil war my great grandfather fought for the west.

Actually, I’m not that dumb, just dumber that some of you. Let’s face it, transformation theory ain’t exactly light beer. But at least I’m smart enough to know it’s got more calories. Beyond that though, I’m basically in the Rodney Dangerfield wing of the music theory hospital.

Dangerfield’s most famous line, of course, is “I just don’t get no respect.” The other day I was so depressed I told my shrink I felt like a dog. He told me to get off the couch.

My wife and I were happy for 25 years. Then we met.

I told my wife I was bored with our sex life and it was her turn to make a move. She did. She moved to Florida. One more?

I was poor growing up as a kid. If I wasn’t a boy, I would’ve had nothing to play with. OK, I knew it, one too many.

So last year when I came home from the Institute after being praised by elite scholars like you, I felt pretty good about myself, like I had actually accomplished something. I didn’t write a famous book or land a cushy job, but I earned a little respect. I had become the Barnum and Bailey of music theory, the Diagelev of SMT, Giovanni Bardi of a Manhattan Camerata.
Unfortunately, my moment of glory didn’t last too long. That night, as I was flipping TV channels with whimsy of an impresario, my teenage daughter Tess, who’s not all that impressed by anything I do to begin with, said, “ya’ know, Dad, you’re real a jerk.”

My crash landing was breathtaking. I plummeted back into the brine like Icarus with a pitiful splash within hours after the closing bell. Hell, I thought, I still don’t get no respect. The Institute was ancient history the second it ended. I suffered a relapse back into the Dangerfield ward.

Actually, it’s already starting again this year. When I read my daughter my speech about how hard it is to have an original idea like David, she said, “gee Dad, why don’t you just come up with one of you own—like maybe the Heimlich maneuver.”

So let me say that whatever compliments I might get from here on in, I’m very grateful. But in the long run, and probably even the short, none of this will matter too much. I’ve learned to savor my peaks between the valleys, and thank you for trekking with me up one of the highest. But I’m all too familiar with the rocky terrain. Whether it comes from your kids, could be your boss or your spouse, sooner or later reality has a sobering way of yanking you back into the Dangerfield ward. And that’s where you’ll find me, in the critical care unit.

And even though we probably don’t appreciate it at the time, that’s probably the best way to get a little smarter too. It’s cheaper than brain surgery—and requires a lot less preparation than the Institute.

Thank You Speech

This morning I’d like to take just a few minutes to dispel the gratifying illusion that I’ve accomplished all this on my own, and thank some folks who helped make this extraordinary event possible. First off, I’d like to express my appreciation to Troy Ettert, Heather Feldman, Eva Sze, and Jen Zetlan, who all helped enormously in running this year’s Institute. Please note they’re all talented and promising scholars and musicians in their own right, and in time they’ll likely be sitting where you are. Let’s give them all a well deserved round of applause.

Second, it’s high time to thank our absolutely superb faculty, Bob, Rick, Joe, Henry, John, and Ed. There’s no question that the Institute’s success in attracting outstanding scholars like you is attributable to their intellectual stature and pedagogical skill. They bravely confronted the challenge of leading workshops before an intimidating group of peers, and did it with expertise and finesse.

Beyond that, it’s evident that each of them put a tremendous amount of thought and effort into making this an extraordinary educational experience for us all. I must warn everyone here that as I solicit others of you to conduct future workshops, you’ll be held to the same high standard this remarkable group has set for us today. I’d therefore like to ask the six members of our faculty to please stand and accept our heartiest applause.

Within their ranks, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Rick and Joe. As co-chairs of this year’s faculty, they helped me plan this event from the ground up, selecting the faculty and participants, and making innumerable decisions along the way. Both Rick and Joe are easy and efficient to work with. Particularly for someone like me who debates anything and everything, I discovered why these two are not only outstanding and prolific scholars, but true leaders in our field, both administratively and pedagogically. They know how to run things effectively and how to get things done. We’re all indebted to them. Thanks, Rick and Joe.

Finally, I’d like to express my appreciation to each one of you for coming to the Institute.
and making the personal commitment that entails. This is a pivotal moment in the history of transformational theory. It’s never been done before, and whatever it means, it means something important, and you helped make it special. David has passed the transformational torch to a new generation of scholars, and the future of T-theory is ripe with potential. It’s our task now to fulfill it.

So to the entire lot of you, I tip my hat for taking the plunge, doing the work, pushing yourself through this, and making it a rich and memorable experience for us all. I hope the Institute has challenged you as a scholar and inspired you as a person. If it has done that, even if only that, then its greatest mission has been achieved.

Short of this loftier objective though, I hope we’ve all learned more about transformational theory too—but maybe then again, let’s hope not too much for our own good. Before we start our final day together, I’d merely like to share two warnings. The first is from William Carlos Williams, who cautions us that even knowledge ceases to be human when it becomes a fetish. And the second is once again from Paul Valery. Addressing a group of learned physicians, he inquired, “since you know so much about the organic functioning of the reproductive organs, can you still bring yourself to make love?”

Closing Ceremony

It’s time to bring the third annual Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory to a close. This was an incredible experience, and one that I’m delighted not only to have made possible, but to have been a part of myself. I thank you all once again for participating, but more so for contributing to its success. This was a group effort, and we did a good job. Before we disband, I have four matters to take care of.

First, I’d like to remind everyone to fill out your Institute Evaluation Sheet in your conference packet and send it to me in the stamped envelope in your folder. If you enjoyed this experience and were stimulated by it, please take the time and effort to share your reactions and explain why. It would mean a lot to me and the other folks who made this happen.

Second, if you don’t already know, next year’s 2004 program will be an Institute on Musical Form, led by another brilliant faculty of Bill Caplin, Janet Schmalfeldt, Bob Morgan, Scott Burnham, Jonathan Bernard, Warren Darcy, and Jim Hepokoski, capped off with Charles Rosen as our keynote guest. It will be very special and I anticipate more applicants than we’ve ever had before.

Beyond that, we’re also planning the 2005 Institute on the topic of Rhythm and Temporality, led by a distinguished faculty of Chris Hasty, Justin London, Kofi Agawu, and other authorities in that field, plus our special guest that year, Steve Reich. Things are already in the works for 2006, 2007, and even 2008 on topics like chromaticism, jazz, and sketch studies. Each year a different subject will be explored, and other suggestions are welcome. What we need in each case is a core group of scholars working in a particular area of sufficient interest to form a faculty.

Third, I’d like to ask each of you, and especially those from abroad, to go home and tell your friends and colleagues about the Institute, and encourage them to join us in the future. Our purpose is to establish greater communication and collegiality throughout our profession, and to give scholars in all locations a meaningful opportunity to come together. The Institute is a blessing bestowed upon our entire community, and I urge you all take advantage of it and nurture it as long as we can. I also think it offers an escape hatch out of the impasse Kevin diagnoses in
his book, and in the end, it may ultimately have a larger impact on the nature of our discourse beyond these 4 special days in June.

The last order of business is to present each of you with your official diploma evidencing your graduation from the Institute. which I will try to do as sanctimoniously as possible, by summoning each of you to come up and walk across the stage. Although we’re all teachers, as scholars we’ve never stopped being students either. So even though it’s corny, we need some rite of passage.

And after that, once you all have diploma in hand and are back in your seat, for those of you who can stay, I’d like to open the floor for anyone to share their thoughts and reflections about this experience and what it meant to them. The Institute is an intensely personal thing, and I’m interested in what you have to say about it. But first, having all survived these past four days in relative tact, it’s time to drop the gavel on these proceedings.

As Director of this noble enterprise, I hereby call the roll of newly admitted fellows into the Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory. As I read your name aloud in groups of six, please come up and walk across the stage to receive your diploma manifesting your participation in the 2003 Institute on Transformational Theory and Analysis, and your affiliation in this august body from this day hence:


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON MUSICAL FORM

June 24-27, 2004
Mannes College of Music
New York City

Introduction and Formalism

Good morning members of the fourth annual Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory, and welcome to New York. Each of you is a distinguished scholar coming together with your peers not as a passive listener to a select roster of papers but as equal participants in a musical think tank. We’re gathered here from around the country, the continent,
and the world to teach, challenge, and intrigue each other through an open exchange of ideas, doubts, and discoveries.

This year’s topic of musical form is a fitting one, because the idea of form has a lot to do with the Institute itself. The function of the Institute is not simply to convey information, but engage in a distinctive mode of interaction. In other words, the significance of our gathering lies not merely in its content, but in its form and our manner of relating to each other while we’re here.

We’re about to embark on an intense and strenuous journey together that is as different from typical conferences as possible. Over the next four days, we’ll cease to be a mere aggregation of separate individuals, and become a close knit, unitary organism in which all members are contributory and subordinate to the welfare of the whole. This is an egalitarian community of scholars, a town meeting in an intellectual democracy whose goal is shared exploration, unfettered inquiry, and spirited debate. Our workshops, plenary discussions, even our meals have a lesson to teach in the art of form.

Consistent with our Quaker meeting approach, there are a few simple guidelines I’ll ask you to observe. First, other than my morning chats, the modality here is dialogue, not monologue. We’re here not just to learn from our faculty, but from each other as well. We’ve all come both as students and teachers, and even our group leaders are our peers. It’s collective discourse we’re after, not soliloquies. So I urge each of you to roll up your sleeves and assume responsibility for actively contributing what you know, what you doubt, what you don’t know, and what you want to learn. The success of the Institute depends on everyone’s generous participation.

Second, while we discourage bystanding, we also frown on grandstanding. We’re all expected to talk, but also to listen. So please don’t sit back passively and observe, but don’t filibuster either. You can challenge and even confront, but never antagonize. Be collegial.

Third, in order to fulfill our collective mission, you need to commit yourself fully without reservation, both intellectually and socially. You should eat all your meals together except as noted, be on time to all events, including breakfast and these morning sessions, and direct your entire time and energy toward maximizing the experience. Stick with the program, don’t pick and choose, sleep late, or wander off physically or mentally. We’re strengthening the collegial bonds of our profession, and staying the course has a cumulative effect. Four days from now, you’ll have the satisfaction of helping to create something unique that none of us will soon forget.

Enough for the ground rules. Now, for those of you who don’t already know, just a few days ago, after over a year of planning and preparation, both Warren Darcy and Jim Hepokoski found themselves unable to come because of extenuating personal circumstances. They are both extremely disappointed, as am I, and everyone else. Their absence is our loss. Nonetheless, the dedicated members of their Sonata Theory workshop have decided to plunge ahead without what Jeff Perry called “the founding fathers.” Dan Harrison has graciously assumed the reins as the convener (that’s his term) of what will be more like a real study group among equals. And that, I think, is the silver lining in Warren’s and Jim’s absence. Their workshop will not only be a test of Sonata Theory, but of the Institute as well. Through its uncharted process of discovery, it may be that very group, among all the others, that best fulfills our mission of collaborative learning.

As in the past, I’ve reserved some time in these early morning sessions for a few fleeting reflections of my own. This is not intended to be self-indulgent, but rather a way for me to set our tone each day, ease us into the heavy lifting of the workshops, and personalize my own planning of this event beyond the realm of pure logistics.
In addition to music theory I also teach legal theory, and I’ve been thinking about their relationship. They’re both normative regimes, regulative enterprises concerned with the structure, pattern, and intelligibility of ordered interactions—one between notes, the other between people. Given this conceptual nexus, what lessons can jurisprudence teach us about musical form? Just as many of our contemporary ideas about musical form have blown down from Canada—McGill to be precise—there’s an innovative Canadian scholar in Toronto, Ernest Weinrib, whose legal *Formenlehre* I’d like to transpose into music today.

The study of musical form, from this perspective, is the study of music’s intelligibility. This refers to a specific kind of relationship between form and content. When we assert the intelligibility of something, a particular law or piece of music, we purport to know what that something is. This apprehension of “whatness” presupposes that the something constitutes a this and not a that. In other words, it has what can be called determinate content. Determinate content is what distinguishes one piece from other pieces, and prevents it from falling back into the chaos of unintelligible indeterminacy that its identification as a specific piece, a this and not a that, denies. Content thus has both a positive and negative significance: it makes the thing in question what it is, and at the same time differentiates it from what it is not.

The set of properties that renders particular musical content determinate constitutes the piece’s form. Form is the ensemble of characteristics that define it as an entity similar to other entities of the same kind, and thereby distinguishes it from entities of a different kind. Form is therefore not separate from content, but represents those aspects of content that make it determinate, and to that extent define the content as content. Form makes content determinate as a this and not a that, and thus differentiates it from the indeterminacy of featureless existence.

The formal characteristics that make the content of a tree, for example, determinate as a tree include its size, shape, color, branches, and so on. By reference to these characteristics of treeness, we understand all the embodiments of this form as constituting the same sort of entity, while recognizing each individual tree as a separate thing. The ensemble of characteristics that constitute its form is what makes the object intelligible as a tree. It has the determinate content of what we call a tree inasmuch as it is the embodiment of a generalized form. The extent to which each individual tree is different or unique represents gaps between the common form of treeness and its instantiation in a particular tree.

Form and content are therefore reciprocal interpenetrating phenomena. Content can’t be entirely formless, because it would lack the very determinativeness which makes it intelligible. To understand anything particular necessitates some formalization of its characteristics. Otherwise, it would just be an indeterminate something or other, or simply nothing in particular. Conversely, if a form had no content at all, it would not be a form of anything and therefore wouldn’t be a form at all.

Form is that which embodies or discloses the intelligibility of the content. Form is intelligible content, and content is determinate form. We understand something when form and content are congruent, that is, when the characteristics that define the form represent what the content really is and, equivalently, when the content adequately expresses a particular form. Form is the organizing idea latent in musical content, and the test of musical content is its adequacy to the form it expresses.

The notion of form provides an internal standpoint of intelligibility, defined by the interpenetration of form and content. Whatever falls in the gap between content and form—for example, a characteristic of a piece that is not a component of its form or a characteristic of a form not found in a piece—can be viewed as a stylistic error, discrepancy, idiosyncracy, or some
other distinguishing departure from a normative congruence of content and form.

The intelligibility of music as a function of form entails three fundamental aspects: character, unity, and genericity. First, to talk about the form of a piece is to regard it as having a determinate *character* or ensemble of characteristics that allows us to define it as the sort of piece it is. There is no such thing as no form, but form is not identical to the content of the piece itself. The analysis of form entails a meaningful selection of a piece’s individual attributes sufficient to truly characterize it. This requires differentiation between general attributes definitive of its form and those that are merely incidental. In inquiring about the form of a piece, we ask “what elements of form are for this piece and others like it logically determinative?” The specification of these characteristics is never an exhaustive description of all its individuating attributes, since that would be as unilluminating as a detailed map drawn to actual scale that reproduces the topography it’s supposed to outline.

Second, the notion of musical form is predicated upon a postulate of *unity*. The piece that has a form is by definition a single entity, characterized by the ensemble of attributes that make it what it is. In analyzing a piece’s form, we construe it not as a mere aggregate of independent properties, but as an integrated whole that is not reducible to, but is greater than the disparate sum of its parts. The characteristics that define a musical form are understood as interrelated through the internal coherence or consistency of the piece itself. This is manifested through a configuration of elements on the basis of repetition, its opposite, or change, and their hybrid, variation.

Third, musical form defines the piece’s *genericity*. We regard all the manifestations of a particular form as comprising a class or genre possessing the same fundamental character, setting it apart from pieces of a different character. Because defining a form involves distinguishing essential from inessential qualities, form refers not to a piece’s individuated particularity, but to a more general rubric under which it falls. Form is thus the principle that allows the grouping or classification of different things with others of the same sort. Different musical forms represents alternative justificatory structures or ordering schemes through which intelligibility is grasped. The set of properties that makes something a sonata, for instance, is found in all or most sonatas, and constitutes the genericity of what it is to be a sonata. Each specific sonata has individual features unique to itself, but which are inessential from the broader perspective of form.

It is through these three aspects of form—character, unity, and genericity—that we grasp music’s fundamental nature or intelligibility. The purpose of formal analysis is to distill this essential nature or intelligible essence, and thereby understand what music is. As scholars, music for us is largely constituted by *thought* rather than *sound*, an exhibition of intelligence whose content is comprised of concepts that utilize tones as a vehicle to inform abstract relationships.

Musical creativity is essentially cognitive; the sound is a symbol. Music is a way of imaging or thinking, congruent with the ideas of which it is comprised, and its intelligibility lies in discovering the rational order and connection of these ideas. Like law, it specifies the patterns and principles of coherent relationships, but through the medium of sound rather than society. To understand music as the manifestation of form is to discern that internal dimension of intelligibility or lawfulness in its content. Musical form is the intelligibility of musical content, and musical content is the lawful realization of intelligible form.

That concludes a hopefully not too somnambulistic discourse on the jurisprudential nature of musical form, extrapolated from contemporary legal theory. I doubt if any of you imagined that’s what lawyers think about. Now, before we take a break, I’d like to pause and say a few words about our colleague, Jonathan Kramer. Jonathan was going to be with us today, but passed
away unexpectedly a few weeks ago. I’ve known Jonathan for thirty years since our student days at Yale, he a junior composition faculty member and me a meshuggah law student who spent most of his time in the music school.

Jonathan was very excited about coming to the Institute, and I was excited about it too. I’d like to read a passage from the preface to his book, *The Time of Music*, not only to pay tribute to him as a scholar and friend, but because it ironically captures the sense of what I think this Institute is all about. In introducing his book, Jonathan wrote [with some emendations]: “Rather than a chain of causally related ideas, I try to present a field of information, opinion, speculation, and strategies. My thoughts are interrelated as they are diverse. My aims are not to prove hypotheses nor develop theories, but rather to challenge through suggestions. I am more interested in asking the right questions than in finding the right answers. Questions can open up discussions, avenues of thought, and modes of perception; answers tend to close off such things. I enjoy sudden shifts of tone or subject matters, and finding less than obvious relationships between apparently contradictory thoughts. My approach is alternately speculative, theoretical, informal, analytic, scientific, and personal. My purpose is to encourage you to be creative, involved, and vital.”

Although Jonathan’s no longer with us, his words describe exactly the spirit and manner of how I think we should operate here. So on that note, I propose we take a ten minute coffee break before reconvening to begin our opening plenary session which Bill will lead. We’ll go all morning and then have lunch together upstairs on the third floor. The men’s bathrooms are floors 1 and 4, and the women’s are on 1 and 3. Janet’s and Scott’s workshops, and the Sonata Theory study group begin this afternoon on the third floor in the rooms indicated on the schedule in your packet, together with a map, an evaluation form which you’ll eventually hand in, information about forthcoming programs, and your personally designed Mannes Institute lapel pin.

Each workshop will take a ten to fifteen minute break or so in the middle, and there will be coffee and snacks on the mezzanine on this floor. Tonight right after the workshops is the buffet at my house, which as you can see on your map is only a few blocks away and easy to get to. My wife Nancy and I have been cleaning up all week, so you really don’t want to miss that. Now if any of you have any questions or problems and you can’t find me, just look for Ilya, the blonde Russian pianist who’s our administrative assistant, or one of his helpers. Other than that, we’re ready to go. Any questions?

---

**Greek Form**

As far as I can tell, the origin of our idea of form, like most ideas I like, is Greek. The Greek word *eidos* means form, type, species, or constitutive nature. Its earliest reference in Homer and the pre-Socratics, Democritus and Empedocles, is to the appearance or shape of what one sees. The plural, *eide*, is the source of the word “idea.” From the beginning then, the notion of form is closely related to the notion of an idea, of some conceptual and constructive shaping of reality. Form is an idea which gives order to things.

Over time *eidos* became broadened and abstracted to mean characteristic property or type. The earliest Greeks no doubt had a clear understanding of the form of things apart from their outward appearance, based on some general trait of inner intelligibility. Herodotus refers to a particular *eidos* or type of leaf which acts like a dye, and tells us when the Lydians suffered a famine, they invented different forms of games to divert their hunger. Thucydides uses *eidos* to describe the essential nature of a disease. But it’s Plato, of course, who canonized the concept of
form, so let’s revisit his theory, which itself forms the foundation of all further discussions of form.

Whenever a plurality of things have a common name, they share what Plato calls a form. This is the universal nature or quality inherent in the concept of the thing itself. There are many rondos, for example, but a single concept of a rondo. Plato’s forms are not subjective, but the embodiment of objective essences. We discover forms instead of inventing them.

Plato calls these objective essences eide, meaning ideas or forms, which he uses interchangeably. Although idea in ordinary parlance refers to a subjective concept in the mind, Plato uses it to refer to the objective content of universal concepts. Platonic forms exist apart from any particular thing, and apart from the mind that apprehends them. They are transcendent exemplars or objective prototypes. Essentially whatever has a name as a species has a form. Plato’s forms are also hierarchically arranged, so that some forms are more important that others. He has ethical forms, natural forms, mathematic forms, relational forms, and by inference, musical forms as well. There are forms of existence, the same, the different, motion, and of rest.

Sensible or empirical things are mere copies of ideal forms, and participate in them. Since these are invariably subject to change, they are always becoming and therefore never truly exist. The purpose of science, or music theory, is the study of universal archetypal forms or patterns, because these alone constitute the only true and enduring musical reality. The relationship between form and content in Platonic theory, that is between the normative eternal forms and their transient sensible content, is a bilateral or reciprocal one. The form causes the appearance as it were, and the appearance participates in it as an actualization of the form. The sensible object is a copy, or eikon in Greek, of its universal model, paradeigma in Greek, which is the form.

Plato’s forms are somewhat akin to Kant’s noumena or things in themselves operating behind the phenomena of perception. Noumena comes from the Greek nous, meaning mind or intelligence, which for Plato is the faculty by which the forms are comprehended. The Greek word for law, nomos, shares the same root as nous and noumena, suggesting a connection between the ordering function of ideas and the notion of law as a means of ordering and shaping reality. This in part is what I explored yesterday.

What might be the source of Plato’s elaborate theory of form? One likely influence is Socrates, his teacher, who sought to define absolute ethical qualities of virtue to refute the moral relativism of the Sophists. The Socratic definitions may have evolved into Plato’s forms. While Plato accepted the relativism of immanent reality like the Sophists, he denied the relativity of knowledge and virtue like Socrates by postulating an absolute in the transcendent world of forms. Given the fluctuating nature of sensible phenomena, true knowledge would be impossible unless there were some stable, eternal reality beyond the merely sensible. Plato’s forms are that suprasensible reality, and thus the object and cause of all knowledge. The study of form Platonic form is the key to Socratic virtue, which is an idea I will have more to say about tomorrow in a slightly different context.

The great difference between Socrates and Plato, of course, as Kierkegaard’s emphasizes, is that Socrates was grounded and concerned with subjective existence, whereas Plato engaged in flights of abstract speculation. There’s a wonderful passage in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript to Philosophical Fragments where Kierkegaard says that Socrates’ ugly physical appearance was actually a great asset, because it repelled his students from admiring and imitating their teacher, thus inducing them to discover the truth on their own. This same principle no doubt applies in some of our own teaching as well.
Nietzsche accused Plato of being an enemy of the world, setting up an ideal realm of pure form as a refuge from reality in reaction to the strife of Athenian politics. But if Plato was disillusioned with life, it was only insofar as it is disordered and fragmentary, out of harmony with what he believed to be stable norms of true value and universal significance.

When Aristotle came along, he rejected his mentor’s concept of form as impossible and meaningless. How could something that exists apart from an object contain its essence? If the world of appearances is merely an imitation as Plato claims, it has no objective reality and therefore can’t be the subject of knowledge. The main difference, therefore, between Plato’s and Aristotle’s theories of form is that for Plato the forms are transcendent while for Aristotle they are immanent—that is, the form of something is indigenous to the thing itself.

Form for Aristotle is an immanent essence contained within the sensible object itself, which thus becomes a composite of content and form. The individual object therefore participates in the general form or pattern, but contains its own real immanent form embodied concretely within its own physical structure. Form represents the intelligent essence of an existing object.

Both Plato and Aristotle, of course, believed that form was the proper object of study, as opposed to the particular. True knowledge resides in the universal element in things, i.e., their specific similarity, and not their individual particularity. The particular is relevant only to the extent it participates in and reveals the general form. The scientist or philosopher therefore is not concerned with individual leaves, for example, but with the essence of all leaves, with “leafness” or that identity found in all individual leaves as members of a species.

The form of an object becomes the proper object of knowledge because it is the essential element and has a higher reality than which is merely particular. The individual perishes, yet the species persists. One horse dies, yet the nature of horses remains the same, and it is the nature of horses, like the nature of sonatas, that we must consider, not any individual horse or sonata. That which makes the object an individual of this or that kind, that which is the chief element in the thing and the object of analysis, is the universal element, the form of the thing, which the mind abstracts and conceives in terms of its generality.

That which particularizes and thus distinguishes the thing as a specific entity in its own right, on the other hand, however fascinating, represents the inevitable gap between form and content, that is, between a general norm and its manifold manifestations. The slavish adherence to abstract rules and forms at the expense of variegated reality is an authoritarian reaction to the chaos of experience, a childhood memory of paternal omnipotence. But by the same token, to unduly prioritize the incorrigible concreteness of existence over any postulate of essence whatsoever is to reject rational thought out of an equally infantile sense of disappointment by the inevitably deviation between idea and reality. Without the possibility of abstract form, one is lost in the chaos of particular instances. Everything becomes merely itself, an existential tautology and nothing more.

The scientist, or the music analyst, therefore, extracts the universal element of form from a piece, concretely yet imperfectly embedded within its content, while still celebrating their incongruence. Music is thus compound, consisting of both content, the individual structure, and form, its essential defining element that embodies its species. By replacing Plato’s transcendent forms with immanent ones, Aristotle shifted the object and method of knowledge to the empirical and demonstrative rather than the metaphysical and intuitive, and thus marks the beginning of rational science.

In the hands of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew, however, Plato’s older transcendent forms were reconstrued and reconfigured as the thoughts or ideas of God. Nature emulates the models of the
deity, its creator, as the ultimate craftsman. Philo’s spiritual interpretation of form as divine conception revived Plato’s metaphysics as against Aristotle’s empiricism, and eventually blossomed into a resurgence of neo-Platonism with Plotinus at the dawn of Rome. And as antiquity evolved into medievalism, and Hellenism waxed into Christianity, the ancient Greek dialectic between Platonic transcendence and Aristotelian immanence—filtered now through the Judaic prism of messianic theology as the dialectic between God and man—becomes embodied, if not resolved, in the incarnation of Christ.

Rosen Introduction

Sometime last year I gave a paper at the New York AMS meeting about the positive effect Schenker’s legal training had on his musical thought. Scott Burnham chaired the session, which also included a paper by Richard Kramer. Having gone to law school myself and spent years studying jurisprudence, it was important for me to consider how this might have been a good thing for Schenker rather than a total waste of his time and mine. If I ever put a period on my dissertation, this is what it will be about.

When I finished reading my paper, some guy in the back row who I could barely see and didn’t know proceeded to tell me in the gruffest voice and bluntest of terms that I had it all wrong, and that law school was a bad thing for Schenker—and presumably me too—and that it explains all the rigidity in his personality—and in mine. It was a triple-barreled attack: anti-Schenker, anti-law, and it seemed anti-me. Calling upon the very legal skills he impugned, I fended him off as best I could, but later wondered whether my inquisitor was right. Maybe I was just projecting, trying to rationalize my own aborted efforts at the bar. An ominous cloud settled over my presentation, let alone my entire thesis.

Scott, as session chair, sat completely inert and declined to bail me out, either in deference to the mysterious prosecutor in the back row, or operating under his understanding of the Heisenberg principle of conference management. When the ordeal ended, I asked Scott who this prickly fellow was, and why he didn’t throw me a life line. With that sheepish look Scott can sometimes muster, he confessed sympathetically that any rescue effort would have been futile: I was in the grips of vintage Rosen. Although I had read Charles’ books, I had never met him in person and until then had absolutely no idea who he was. My introduction was ordeal by fire.

After the conference, Richard Kramer and I shared a cab back to the upper west side. Perhaps sensing my bruised ego, he altruistically invited me to a cocktail party at his house. Richard’s wife is a lawyer, so I always felt like I was some sort of marital hybrid in their presence. Scott, David Cohen and Maynard Solomon eventually showed up—and of course, so did Sir Charles. I was hoping to meet Sigmund Levarie, who was supposed to come in from Brooklyn but never materialized. I had recently read his Dictionary of Musical Morphology, and discovered he’s Rick Cohn’s uncle, which made things a lot clearer.

I ended up instead sitting by the hor d’ouerves next to Scott. Still practicing strict noninterference, we sat there together in silence listening to Charles hold court on an astonishing range of topics. I became mesmerized. I gradually realized not only that his critique of me wasn’t personal at all, but more importantly that this guy knew more about the inner workings of music than just about anyone I’d ever met. I was actually happy that he had taken an interest in my paper, albeit critical. After a few glasses of vino and a couple cheeseballs, I found myself liking Charles more and more. And from that moment on, I’ve always seen him in a charming and almost endearing way. And I suspect a lot of other people do too.
Charles is charismatic and extremely entertaining. He told a joke that night about a terrorist who hijacked a plane, grabbed a stewardess and demanded, “take me to Detroit.” The stewardess said, “that’s where we’re going.” I didn’t tell Charles I’m originally from the Motor City. Last night at the reception, after I showed Charles by dog Lucy, a Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retreiver, he asked me why the French were such poor duck hunters. When I confessed I didn’t know, he said, “because they can’t throw the dog high enough.”

Charles is also profound. At one point during Richard’s dinner party he entered a prolonged and almost catatonic silence for nearly 8 seconds, and then suddenly burst out in a total nonsequitur, “Paul Valery wanted to find out where ideas came from, so he asked Albert Einstein. Einstein said he thought best while walking in the woods. Valery replied, ‘so you carry a notebook to write down your ideas?’ Einstein laughed and said, ‘no, no—ideas are very rare.’”

The fact is, Charles himself is very rare. Most of all, he’s a complete musician. Who among us has so brilliantly combined serious scholarly work with a vibrant performance career? Charles’s books on the Classical Style, Sonata Forms, and The Romantic Generation have a coveted place on everyone’s shelf. The size of his repertoire is only outmatched by his energy and enthusiasm. In the course of planning this event, when I couldn’t get a response from anyone else, I would have phone conversations and messages saying, “this is Charles, I’m in Genoa for the moment,” or “I’ll be in Paris on Monday and back in New York on Thursday,” or “I took a 7 hour train to Ferrara,” or “Ghent is getting slightly better.”

Like all of you, I’ve always considered Charles to be an outstanding scholar and musician. But now, I can say I also consider him a friend. I’m absolutely delighted he’s here, and so it’s my great pleasure and privilege to welcome and introduce our good colleague, teacher, and my friend, the distinguished and enchanting Charles Rosen.

Schenker, Morality, and Zimmermann

We’re not really here to talk about Schenker, but it would be foolish to deny, particularly at Mannes, that his ghost is lurking around in our halls. As Joel is fond of pointing out, even our elevator is Schenkerian, since it stops at 1, 3, and 5. For those of you who may be uncomfortable in your sojourn in our Schenkerian Mecca, I assure you that four days in this humble shrine is insufficient exposure for either conversion or contagion. Nonetheless, if only out of fidelity to our patron saint, I feel some moral obligation to acknowledge Schenker as the spiritual leader of this place, and perhaps of our entire profession.

I say moral obligation, because there is, after all, a fundamental connection for Schenker between music and morality. As Oswald Jonas once noted, Schenker’s conception of music is “tantamount to an acoustical perception of moral law itself.” Music’s highest purpose in his eyes is not simply to entertain or even uplift, but to educate and instruct. The Tonleben encode moral values laden with the power to heal. Like the ancient Greeks I spoke about yesterday, Schenker conceived of music as nomas, a guide to the well-ordered life, or what Benedetto Croce calls the “triad of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful.” Music is not only a conveyor of emotion and reason, but of virtue; music has “moral beauty.” How then did Schenker’s conception of music get so wrapped up with morality?

Some accurately discern an affinity between Schenker’s musical ethics and Eduard Hanslick—I’m thinking of Nick Cook and Alan Keiler—though these two both acknowledge there’s no evidence they were ever acquainted. While personal contact is certainly no guarantee of intellectual influence—many of you whom I know have had absolutely no influence on me
whatsoever—it would nonetheless be interesting if Schenker actually knew someone who shared this ethical orientation. And the fact is, he did.

During his early legal studies at the University of Vienna Schenker took a course in Practical Philosophy with a man named Robert Zimmermann. While the great 19th-century jurist Georg Jellinek was Schenker’s most influential law professor, it was Zimmermann who first introduced Schenker to the fundamental idea that music and morality share a common bond through the structural intermediary of form. Zimmermann presented Schenker with an ethical and aesthetic Formenlehre, an integral doctrine of universal forms governing music, morality, and law.

Artistic decisions according to Zimmermann implicate the same underlying cognitive mechanisms as ethical ones, differing only in their content. Structurally coherent form is “morally beautiful;” incoherent form is “morally ugly.” By demonstrating a common foundation for musical form and moral form, such that the norms of beauty are analogous to those of virtue, Zimmermann laid the cornerstone for Schenker’s moral conception of music.

Zimmermann’s own equation of music and morality derives from Johann Friedrich Herbart, generally regarded as the founder of 19th-century aesthetic formalism. Herbart’s ideas about the underlying laws of human cognition and development had a significant influence on Freud as well. Zimmermann, Herbart’s greatest disciple, introduced Hanslick, his friend and colleague, to Herbart’s ideas and exerted a determinative influence on his thinking. On the Musically Beautiful is in fact a concise articulation of Herbartian philosophy transmitted to Hanslick by Zimmermann, to whom Hanslick himself gave credit. In asserting that the value of art lies in its intrinsic structure rather than its extrinsic expression, Hanslick applied the same formalist approach found in Zimmermann’s own monumental work, General Aesthetics as a Theory of Form.

Practical Philosophy, the title of Schenker’s course with Zimmermann, refers to the philosophy of practical action, a term derived from Kant’s Critique of Practical Reason, as opposed to the more abstract metaphysics of his Critique of Pure Reason. The goal of theoretical philosophy is knowledge, while the goal of practical philosophy is the application of knowledge to action. Law is practical philosophy or ethics in action; music is practical philosophy or aesthetics in action. Zimmermann held that ethics and aesthetics are two branches of a unified science of the mind. They both invoke common norms, forms, and concepts, or what he called the “law-governed interaction of mental events and correlations between external data and our subjective response governed in accordance with apriori forms of cognition.”

For Zimmermann these recurrent forms of thought process the raw input of experience into coherent mental objects, no matter the context or content. Cognition is ultimately “aesthetic” in the sense of being “creative,” since we dynamically “create” our conception of reality through the operation of these fundamental forms. What appears or is contained in these forms, that is, their particular content in either law or music, is extrinsic to their essential character, which is determined solely by their internal relationship and configuration.

Zimmermann’s fundamental forms enshrine a harmonious state of affairs as normative standards or preferences. These include such things as agreement, balance, closure, correctness, perfection, and the characteristic. These abstract formal relationships govern all judgments of good versus bad, right or wrong, beautiful or ugly, regardless of their medium, because in each case the specific content is extrinsic and subordinate to the underlying forms of relation themselves. According to Zimmermann, we have an innate formal preference for agreement over disagreement, balance over imbalance, closure over nonclosure, and so on, hardwired into our
cognitive apparatus. As in Schenker’s approach to music, these structural forms are distanced from and prioritized over the particularized empirical content they contain. And like Schenkerian analysis, Zimmermann’s formal analysis entails the reduction of ethical or aesthetic content to its apriori conceptual forms, piercing through the surface to reveal what he calls the structural “morphology of the beautiful.”

Zimmermann’s forms, like Schenker’s, are universal, immutable, and objectively valid. Thus, he says, “the development of art concerns only the material, while aesthetics has the task of seeking out the forms. Which tonal connections are pleasing, for example, is decided by the ear, but the forms by means of which they please can be determined only by thought.” Analysis for Zimmermann, therefore, is the process of evaluating both musical and moral conduct in accordance with ideal forms. That which is musically pleasing, and that which is ethically right, both elicit our preference because they each evoke a favorable cognitive form. The musically flawed, as well as the ethically wrong, elicit our disfavor because they both conflict with a normative form.

Aesthetics and ethics are two parallel departments of a unified Geschmacklehre or theory of sensibility. Ethical and aesthetic judgments each entail cognitive acts of organizing data in accordance with the same set of underlying forms. Virtuous conduct partakes of an essential “moral beauty” analogous to musical beauty. The task of practical philosophy is to clarify the operation of these apriori forms in a coherent system, either in law or music.

At a formative stage of his intellectual development, Schenker encountered a comprehensive theory of ethical and aesthetic formalism that resonates in his conception of music as a moral compass. Robert Zimmermann’s course in Practical Philosophy in the fall of 1884 established this affinity between music and morality as manifestations of the same underlying forms. Although different endeavors activate different material content in implicating these universal norms—music via tones, painting via colors, ethics via thoughts, law via actions—the apriori forms which process this data and guide our evaluations are inherently the same.

Even today, law students are required to take a course in legal ethics. What was different in Schenker’s case, because of Zimmermann, was that ethics were intimately related to aesthetics, and, for our purposes, that this relationship was a function of form. This correlation between music and morality through the intermediary of form was outlined in an explicit and compelling way to Schenker as a young and impressionable law student in the foothills of his ascent to becoming the greatest musical mind of the modern era, let alone the spiritual founder of the school in which our latter day Institute is housed. And whether we subscribe to his theories or not, it with this same impulse of a higher and nobler purpose that our own explorations ought to proceed.

But don’t we already feel that by elucidating the masterpieces to our students, we are somehow instructing them in the finer virtues of life, as well as art? When you play the Well-Tempered Clavier, don’t you share my sense of something incredibly beautiful, but also inherently right? And is there anyone among us who listens to the Ninth Symphony, or even the First, who doesn’t feel like they’re brushing shoulders, not just with a genius—but a hero?

_Banquet Speech_

Oliver Wendell Holmes, the greatest legal mind America has ever produced, told a story about a butter churn. An old dairy farmer in Vermont would rise each morning, milk his cow,
and churn the milk into butter. One night while the farmer was asleep, his neighbor’s mule broke into his barn and smashed up the butter churn. So the farmer went to the local justice of the peace and filed a lawsuit against his neighbor. Two weeks later, the judge called the parties into court to announce his decision. “I’ve looked through all the regulations of the village,” he said, “and the statutes and cases across the state of Vermont. But I can’t find anything about butter churns. Case dismissed.”

Holmes’s story teaches us a lesson not only about the form of law, but about the law of form. Form is the generalization of the particular, and the particularization of the general. It’s like a loose fitting shoe. Form is a two-way conversation between an idea and reality. And so is this Institute. I had an idea, and now it’s a reality. It has a definite shape, but each time it’s different. *Semper idem sed non eodem modo.* This year we churned butter—next year, who knows—maybe tomatoes.

Gotthold Lessing once said that if God held all truth in his right hand, and in his left hand the lifelong pursuit of it, he would choose the left hand. The Institute is about that pursuit. I hope sharing it has in some way invigorated you as a scholar, inspired you as a teacher, and enriched you as a person. And I hope its form as well as its content has left its mark, not only by stimulating ideas, but by offering an alternative and more humanistic way of working with each other.

If the tragic death of Jonathan Kramer and the sudden misfortune of Jim Hepokoski and Warren Darcy on the eve of the Institute can teach us anything, it’s that life is too short and precarious, and our profession too small and obscure for us not to value and affirm each other as human beings and soulmates, simply because we all share a deep and abiding love of beauty and learning. In this world, that’s rare enough. I’ve worked hard to make this experience meaningful, elegant, and gracious for you all. But beyond that, the task is yours. If even a handful of you have glimpsed that lesson and kindled that spark, then the Institute’s mission, its benefactors’ intent, and my own aspirations have all been achieved. Thank you.

**Stoic Form**

The other day I explored the roots of musical form in classical Greek philosophy. As you already knew, or may recall, Plato believed that physical reality exhibits rational order insofar as it manifests transcendental forms. From a Platonic perspective, our observations of musical form entail an abstract intuition of general properties imperfectly embodied in individual pieces. Aristotle, on the other hand, believed that form is immanent, contained in or arising out of the physical objects themselves. From his perspective, we attempt to discern formal properties inherent within music through empirical scrutiny and analysis of specific pieces. I was somewhat afraid that discussing Plato and Aristotle before a heady crowd like this might be presumptuous. No matter — I’m going to risk it again today by adding a footnote about the Stoics, who you perhaps may not know so well.

Stoicism was the dominant philosophical school of Hellenism after Alexander the Great established the first empire of the west. A pupil of Aristotle, Alexander expanded the boundaries of Attic culture beyond the circumscribed Greek polis to the distant lands of Persia, India, and the Orient. By the age of 25, he had conquered the known world, and changed the entire course of history. The name Stoicism comes from *Stoa*, meaning “porch” or the “painted porch” of murals where Zeno, its founder and his disciples gathered in Athens.

What’s fascinating is that Stoicism is intimately related to the cultural and political
conditions of Alexander’s empire and the expansionism during which it arose. Plato’s and Aristotle’s Athens was an insular, homogenous community with a single language and unitary way of life. Under Alexander, however, the Greeks suddenly came into contact with the alien cultures and unintelligible languages of barbarians or non-Greeks. This unprecedented internationalization shattering the insularity of Greek society had two polar impacts on western thinking about form that were reflected in Stoicism.

Confronted with radical and shocking cultural diversity, Stoicism postulated a universal order or natural law governing all times and places as a way of rationalizing and explaining differences encountered in particular instances and circumstances. This Stoic idea of universality, or universal form if you will, became even more influential as the Roman empire expanded beyond that of Alexander’s. This was especially manifested through the notion of Roman law as a universal code of conduct to govern the disparate tribes and cultures subsumed within the realm of the empire.

At the same time, however, the Hellenistic encounter with alien cultures through Alexander had a profound effect in the opposite direction. While these new and unfamiliar horizons necessitated the affirmation of universality on one hand, they also gave rise to a heightened sense of cultural relativity on the other. And it is this aspect of relativism that impacted significantly upon the older Platonic and Aristotle conceptions of form I discussed the other day.

Despite the fact that one was transcendent and the other immanent, both Platonic and Aristotelian conceptions of form were absolute and realistic, in that they asserted the objective existence and veracity of formal properties. Plato’s and Aristotle’s forms are inherently true and real, establishing a one-to-one correspondence between perception and reality. During the Hellenistic period, as Sextus Empiricus explains, this classical view was perpetuated by the Epicureans.

The Stoics, however, were the first to consider forms as purely mental constructs, subjective functions of the mind, interposed as a filter between perception and reality. And the key area is which this happened was the realm of language. Through the expansion of Alexander’s empire, the Greeks came into contact with barbarians who spoke unintelligible languages, to whom Greek words were meaningless sounds or utterances. In modern semiotic terms, the experience of linguistic unintelligibility led Zeno and others on the painted porch to conclude there was no intrinsic connection between the signifier and the signified. Zeno’s famous paradoxes, like Zen koans, all underscore the inherent meaninglessness of language as a conveyor of truth. For instance, if I continually cut a distance in half, says Zeno, I will never reach the other side, because no matter how small, half will always remain. The “disconnect” arises out of the lack of congruence between the mental concept of halving and physical reality.

The Stoics developed a sophisticated theory of language and cognition to explain this disassociation which prefigures our own postmodern deconstructionism. According to Derrida, the breakdown of language as a signifier of meaning causes a certain cognitive dizziness or vertigo, comparable to the free fall tonal disorientation of a harmonic sequence. This contemporary disintegration of language as a mode of rational discourse parallels the collapse of traditional form and syntax in music as well, where each is deprived of rational structure and reduced to a transient stream of simple sounds and utterances. The surface of the painting becomes flat and the image abandoned. Perception supersedes comprehension.

As a footnote, the purpose of legal education, particularly in the first year, made legendary by television shows and movies like the Paper Chase, is to deliberately induce this Derridian dizziness or skepticism by unhinging the law student’s naive faith in the rationality of language
and logic itself, a sort of conceptual brainwashing to wipe the slate clean of cherished convictions of ingrained truth as an essential predicate to the later acquisition of rhetorical skills of argumentation and persuasion. The Socratic method, contrary to its founder’s own belief in absolute truth and virtue, is utilized precisely to foster the agile situational relativism of his opponents, the Sophists. And it is precisely this sophistical relativism which the Stoics’ theory of language and cognition seeks to justify and explain.

In between words and things lay what they called the “motion of the intellect,” that is purely mental operations or interpretative forms which are overlaid on top of reality and mediate between our perception of things and the things themselves. These interpretative mental constructs do not actually exist like Plato’s and Aristotle’s objective forms, but merely subsist as incorporeal products of the mind. The Stoics called them *lekta*, meaning “that which is said” or “that which is thought.” Unlike Plato and Aristotle, Stoic form is a mental or linguistic phenomenon, a *lekton*, that speakers of a common language share, but speakers of different languages do not.

Instead of the binary connection of Plato and Aristotle, meaning for the Stoics filters through a three-part process, a psychic chain reaction between perception and reality, with the cognitive act of interpretation interposed in between—thus severing the verifiable correlation between either end. The idea of musical form is just that, nothing transcendent or immanent, but simply an idea in the mind and nothing more.

This Stoic concept of form as a mental image represents the first serious crack in the objective, realistic worldview of the Greeks, by interposing a subjective and culture bound lens between us and the things around us. By encountering the otherness of non-Greek civilizations and dialects through the revolutionary conquests of Alexander, the Stoics came to recognize the structure of reality not as a transcendent or immanent verity, but as something more relative and evanescent, ultimately existing within and shaped by the mind itself.

Plato’s and Aristotle’s foundationalism, spawned in the golden age of Pericles, was out of joint with the culturally diverse and fragmented Hellenistic world of Alexander. Stoicism embraced fluid and multiple perspectives engendered by the destabilization of the relationship between language and reality in an age of conquest and expansionism. Since language was indeterminate and lacking in fixed meaning, alternative meanings and cognitive structures were possible. Ideas of universally applicable truths gave way to provisional, decentered, local perspectives which pointed only to other ideas as cultural artifacts, themselves subject to interpretation and reinterpretation. Knowledge was construed according to our own relative subjective or subcultural experience, not measured by conformity with all encompassing, standardized structures or canonical forms of meaning and value.

For Plato and Aristotle, speaking confidently in the homogeneous insularity of Periclean Athens, form represents the true and trusted nature of things, the verifiable object of real knowledge about the world. But for Zeno and the Stoics confronting a more diverse, heterogeneous, and uncertain reality created by Alexander, yet prefiguring our own, truth became merely that which is said or thought, postulated or imagined, a hazy reflection of our own selves, interposed as a prism or even a mirror between us and that which surrounds us.

What if the musical forms we so proudly claim to discern in our humble Institute are neither transcendent absolutes nor immanent realities, but just our own created images, paintings on the walls of our own mind? If so, it is Zeno and the Stoics, pondering paradoxes and murals on their painted porch in that innocent age of cultures colliding, who first turned their gaze inward, toward what Einstein called “the brain’s little attic,” and lit our path as we grope for meaning in
our own uncertain age of discovery. And though it may be heresy in company such as this, in the house that Schenker built, who knows? Somewhere on that journey, like a latter day Alexander, we may one day look up, flushed with vertigo, and gaze at the smile of Buddha—for whom form was emptiness, and emptiness form.

Thank You Speech

Before we start our plenary session, I’d like to dispel the gratifying illusion that I accomplished this all on my own, and acknowledge some important people who helped make it happen. First, I’d like to thank our two administrative assistants, Ilya and Kate, for doing a tireless job in keeping things running smoothly. They are both extremely talented Mannes students, but beyond that, they are dedicated and cheerful. I had fun working with them, and I think we all own them a round of applause.

Second, I want to thank Joel Lester, the dean of Mannes, for putting us up and providing a congenial home for the Institute. The Institute is proud to revive Mannes’ historic legacy as an epicenter for musical scholarship in addition to its reputation as a conservatory. It is important to have someone like Joel at the helm, who is a member of our community and understands that this is a feather in Mannes’ cap. And although the Institute is independently funded, our relationship is crucial to its ongoing success.

Next, I’d like to thank and congratulate our absolutely superb faculty, Jonathan, Bill, Bob, Scott, and Janet—not to mention our pinch hitter, Dan Harrison, who took Warren’s and Jim’s game plan and hit a home run. There’s no question that the Institute’s success in attracting outstanding scholars like you is attributable to their intellectual stature and collegial rapport. They bravely confronted the challenge of leading workshops before an intimidating group of peers, and have done it with panache. Dan in particular picked up the flag from his fallen comrades and carried under heavy fire—sometime friendly fire—from the trenches over the top. I’d like to ask them to stand, including Dan, so we can give them a hearty round of applause.

Within their ranks, I owe a special debt of gratitude to Bill and Janet. As co-chairs of this year’s faculty, they helped me organize this event from the ground up, selecting the faculty and participants, and making innumerable decisions along the way. I discovered why these two are not only outstanding scholars, but leaders in our field. They are sensitive, committed, down to earth, calm under crisis, and both have a wonderful sense of humor. They are good friends, and make a good team together. To be honest, I simply could not have done this without both of them. We’re all indebted to them, particularly me.

In the midst of all the planning, which included some real moments of turmoil, there was nothing quite like sharing what I can only describe as a prolonged belly laugh with Janet. As all of us know, she brings a very contagious enthusiasm and sparkle to everything she does, and we’ve all been blessed by that spirit. And now I’d like to turn to Bill. The very idea of an Institute on musical form was his and his alone. When the Institute first got off the ground a few years ago, and we were still unsure of our footing, Bill took the initiative of approaching me and proposing this topic, and then proceeded to make it happen. His faith in me and his endorsement of what I was trying to accomplish gave me confidence that this could actually work.

Bill is also to a large degree personally responsible for the revival of formal studies in a period when they were somewhat neglected. This, I think, is a significant scholarly achievement. But above all, Bill is a mensch, and that carries a lot of weight with me. One of the great rewards of this Institute has been the friendships I’ve developed not only with Bill, but with Janet, Scott,
Jonathan, Bob, and all of you here. So please, let’s give it up for Bill and Janet as the Lone Ranger and Tonto of this year’s program.

Finally, I’d like to express my deepest appreciation to each of you for trekking to New York and making the considerable investment of time, energy, and money to make this a success. The Institute is by nature a collective beast, and it just won’t run without you. I truly think this is the best group we’ve ever assembled. You have all been so gracious and open with your warm expressions of gratitude.

In addition, I’ve learned something from so many of you here in your remarks, conversations, and demeanor. My only problem is by the next day, I can’t remember what it was. But in any event, to everyone here, I tip my hat for taking the plunge, doing the work, pushing yourself through this, and making it a rich and memorable experience for us all. Now I’ll turn the floor over to Janet, and we can begin our closing plenary session.

Closing Ceremony

It’s time to bring the fourth Mannes Institute to a close. This was an incredible experience, and one that I’m delighted not only to have made possible, but be part of myself. I thank you all once again for participating and contributing to its success. Before we disband, I have four things to do.

First, I’d like to remind everyone again to fill out your Institute Evaluation Sheet in your conference packet and be sure to give it to me or Ilya before you leave. If you enjoyed this experience, please take the time and effort to share your thoughts. It would mean a lot to me and the others who made this happen. Second, if you don’t already know, next year’s 2005 program will be an Institute on Rhythm and Temporality co-chaired by Harald Krebs and Justin London, along with Pieter van den Toorn, Chris Hasty, Kofi Agawu, David Cohen, and our special guest Steve Reich.

In 2006 we’ll have a Chromaticism Institute co-chaired by Dan Harrison and Pat McCreless, along with Charles Smith, Deborah Stein, Richard Kramer, David Kopp, and a special guest to be announced. Plans are percolating for 2007 and 08 as well. Each year a different subject is explored, and other proposals are always welcome. What we need is a core group of outstanding scholars working in a particular area of broad enough interest to form a faculty and attract our peers.

Third, I’d like to ask each of you, and especially the musicologists, to tell your friends and distinguished colleagues about the Institute, and encourage them to join us in the future. Our purpose is to establish greater communication and collegiality throughout all branches of our profession, and to give all scholars an opportunity to come together in an interdisciplinary context. We’ve already outgrown our birthname as the Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory, and until I’ve come up with a better name, we mean musicology too.

Before I move on to the last order of business, I’d just like to open the floor again for a moment to see if anyone has any final comments, questions, or observations they’d like to make about the Institute. Anybody have any unfinished business?

OK, my final task is to present each of you with your diploma evidencing your membership in the Institute, which I’ll try to do as theatrically as possible, by summoning each of you to come up and walk across the stage. Although we’re all teachers we’ve never stopped being students either. So even though it’s corny, we like to graduate. I am certain it will embarrass some of you. Nonetheless, as Director of this noble enterprise, I hereby call the roll of newly
admitted fellows into our ranks. As I read your name aloud in groups of four, please come up to receive your diploma:


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON RHYTHM AND TEMPORALITY

June 25-28, 2005
Mannes College of Music
New York City

Opening Speech

In the third act of As You Like It, the alluring young Rosalind, secretly dressed as a man, explains to Orlando the relative nature of time. Shakespeare’s lovers are in the Forest of Arden, far from the regimentation of civilization. There’re no clocks and thus no objective measure of temporality.

“Time travels in diverse paces with diverse persons,” explains Rosalind. “I’ll tell you with whom time gallops, with whom time trots, with whom time ambles, and with whom time stands still.” “Prithee,” inquires Orlando, “With whom does time gallop?” “With a thief to the gallows,” she answers. “For though he goes as slowly as foot can fall, he thinks himself too soon there.” “And with whom does time trot?” he asks. “Time trots tortuously with a young maid between the contract of her marriage and the day it is solemnized,” she explains. “If the interim be but seven nights, it seems the length of seven years.”

“So with whom does time amble?” “With a priest that lacks Latin, and a rich man that hath not the gout. For the one sleeps easily because he cannot study, and the other lives merrily because he feels no pain—the one lacking the burden of lean and wasteful learning, the other knowing no burden of heavy tedious penury. For them time ambles.” “And last,” asks Orlando, “with whom does time stand still?” “Why, with the lawyers in court,” she exclaims, “for they sleep between trial and trial, and perceive not how time moves.”

Good morning members of the fifth annual Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory. As a former barrister who perceiveth not how time moves, I welcome you to the city that never sleeps. Each of you is a distinguished scholar coming together with your peers, not as
passive listeners to a select roster of polished texts and unchallenged pronouncements, but as equal participants in an active and democratic think tank. Lessing once said that if God held the truth in his right hand, and in his left hand its pursuit, he would choose the left. We’re gathered here today from around the country, the continent, and indeed the world not professing to find the truth, but simply pursue it through an open and vigorous exchange of doubts and discoveries.

This year’s topic of rhythm has something to do with the Institute itself. The reason we’re here is not just to exchange information, but to implement a relationship. The significance of our gathering lies not merely in its content, but in our rhythm of relating to one another. We’re comrades in a contemporary scholastic order, cloistered together in a convent of learning, to shape our ideas, as Augustine put it, on the anvil of discussion.

I warn you we’re about to embark on an intense and strenuous journey that’s different and far more demanding than your typical conference. You can probably already tell by all the reading we’re supposed to have done before we got here. Kofi sent me an enormous pile of articles filled with charts and diagrams. Fortunately I studied speed-reading and read the entire thing last night in twenty minutes . . . It’s about Africa. David sent me a bunch of single-space sheets in Latin. The only word I recognized sounded like a disease.

Over the next four days, we’ll cease to be a mere aggregate of separate individuals, and become an egalitarian community where everyone contributes to the welfare of the whole. Our common goal is shared exploration, unfettered inquiry, and spirited debate. Our workshops, plenary discussions, and even our meals are forums in the art of social rhythm. During this time, I’ve reserved these early morning sessions for a few informal observations of my own. It’s not intended to be indulgent or self-serving, but rather a way for me to set our tone in a personal as well as administrative way. Like Charles Lamb’s essays, they’re cluttered with “surmises, guesses, half-intuitions, dim instincts, and embryonic conceptions.”

Consistent with our Quaker approach, there’re a few simple guidelines I’ll ask you to observe while we’re here. I don’t mean to be pedantic, but the Institute has a distinctive ethos and mission I need to explain. First, aside from my morning talks, the modality here is dialogue, not monologue. We’ve come not just to learn from our faculty, but from each other as well. We’re here both as students and teachers; even our group leaders are our peers. What this means is that everyone here ought to speak up, contribute, ask questions, share insights, further exploration, and give of themselves in the fullest sense of the word. It’s not in accordance with the mission of the Institute to sit back quietly and absorb, no matter how mentally engaged one might be inside. Each of you has something to contribute, or otherwise you wouldn’t be here.

Next, while we discourage bystanding, we also frown on grandstanding. We’re all expected to talk, but also to listen. It’s collective discourse we’re after, not soliloquies. So don’t be a spectator, but don’t filibuster either. You can and should challenge each other—that’s what we’re here for—but not antagonize or personalize. This is a process of collective deliberation and negotiation, so be collegially probing.

Third, in order to fulfill our mission of intensive collective inquiry at the highest possible level, each of us must commit ourselves fully while we’re here, intellectually and socially. For instance, you should eat all your meals together except as noted, attend all events including these morning sessions, and direct your energy on maximizing the experience at hand. Stick with the program, don’t pick and choose, sleep late, or wander off like we tend to do at regular conferences. We’re here to strengthen the bonds of our profession, and staying the course has a cumulative effect. Four days from now, you’ll have the satisfaction of having participated in something unique that none of us will quickly forget.
There’s an ancient myth that Democritus tore out his eyes in a beautiful garden in order to think without distraction. I don’t recommend you go quite that far, but if myth has meaning, Democritus suggests our goal. The city surrounds us, more alluring that any Attic garden. Yet inside these walls, we follow Montaigne’s admonition to focus on that extraordinary undertaking that draws us within, and leave the government and errands of the world to those left behind.

The Anthropology of Rhythm

In my morning chats I’d like to explore our topic of rhythm from an anthropological perspective. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that musical concepts don’t exist in a theoretical vacuum, but have roots in who we are as human beings. Among all elements of music, rhythm has the most ancient provenance. In fact, it has every appearance of being an indigenous human trait. We’re the only species with a sense of rhythm, and for us the trait is universal regardless of age or society. Every human culture has a rhythmic capacity to clap, tap, and keep time together. It’s found in all places, and in all periods of history.

Rhythm is unlearned and spontaneous; it just happens. A baby has the ability to feel a regular beat. Even profoundly handicapped children and adults incapable of learning language have an innate sense of rhythm. Rameau says that a sense of recurrent pulse “comes naturally to everyone; it forces us, as if against our will, to follow its movement.”

Rhythm, in fact, is so pervasive that Blacking calls it a “species-typical trait,” a diagnostic feature of what it means to be human—with the possible exception of my Aunt Harriet, who manages to screw up our seder each year by going into some sort of arrhythmic overdrive evidently afflicting elderly Jews in suburban Detroit. The annual inability of the Alpern family to actually keep a steady beat while chanting “Let My People Go” after three boruchas seems to disprove the theories of every single member of our distinguished faculty—except perhaps Harald. I grew up thinking everyone calls roast beef “brisket.”

Few other living creatures—things like whales, frogs, crickets, birds, and chimpanzees—make spontaneous patterned signals. But only humans are capable of rhythmic entrainment, that is, locking onto and effortlessly maintaining a regular pulse. When disrupted, even synchronous croaking frogs take up to 45 minutes to get back together again, whereas we simply do this at will—noting once again, however, what I will hereafter refer to in strict neo-Riemannian fashion, as the “Aunt Harriet Overdrive Loop”—or AHOL for short.

My dog Lucy, along with horses, fish, and even apes and monkeys, lives in the strangely arrhythmic world of my aunt. Everything for them, and apparently her, just sort of happens in a temporally atomized, disconnected sequence of events—which is probably why no one understands her.

How old is rhythm? Well, pitched instrumental music is about 40,000 years old. That’s about eight times since my ancestors “helped” build the pyramids. But percussion music based on rhythm alone is twenty-five times older, going back at least a million years. If I can mix Babbitt with Gershwin, strike two rocks together once, I got noise. Strike them together twice, I got rhythm.

To give you a better picture of its antiquity, if we condense the entire history of musicmaking into a 400-year time frame from 1600 to today, everything up to 1985 would be non-pitched percussion music based on rhythm alone. The entire history of pitched or melodic music, from the cave man to Cage, would be composed only in the last two decades.

So if a Neanderthal hammered out the first rhythmic pattern at the death of Palestrina
around 1594, the Well-Tempered Clavier would have been composed last April; Tristan would have premiered a month ago; Schenker would have died two weeks ago. Lewin’s GMIT was written four days ago; Chris’s book hit the shelf as you were checking-in last night to the ill-named Quality Hotel, and Justin’s book came out 20 minutes ago while you were eating a bagel. In fact, by my calculations, my own speech today wouldn’t actually begin until tomorrow. Of course, keep in mind 95% of all statistics are made up.

In other words, in the larger scope of things, the pitch relationships we all obsess about are a very recent phenomenon, about as old as America Online. The sheer vintage of rhythm alone suggests that things like pulsing, beating, and patterning have a lot do with what it means to be human in the first place, excluding my aunt.

But in order for rhythm to constitute a biological human trait in a scientific sense, it must serve or at one time have served an adaptive function and have some selective evolutionary value. While rhythm and music are culturally valuable, however, most scholars claim or assume they are biologically useless and serve no purpose in the actual sustenance of life. Music can’t help find food, avoid predators, or overcome parasites. Compared to language, its factual content is minimal. Music may simply be the byproduct of higher intelligence, the secondary result of the evolution of other more fundamental adaptive facilities.

According to some members of our faculty, rhythm may be a bodily or cognitive response to stimuli, or what Chris calls persistence and change. But if evolution is based on the survival of the fittest, the ultimate question is not what is rhythm, but why are we rhythmic at all. To answer that “this is how we perceive time, respond to data, or move together through the world” merely begs the issue: why do we behave in this way in the first place?

So my question over these four mornings is this: does rhythm represent some evolutionary adaptation in its own right? If it is a biological trait, what survival benefits could it confer? What is or was the evolutionary function of rhythm? What is rhythm for? Why are we synchronous beings? In short, what is the anthropological origin of rhythm?

Rhythm is sometimes linked to the heartbeat, a venerable theory proposed by Gaffurius, Mersenne, and the overlooked Ramos de Pareja. But the connection is tenuous. Cross-cultural studies show that people asked to keep a beat generally tap about two times per second, which is faster than the normal human pulse. A better candidate for the isochronic tactus might be the locomotive periodicity of walking. Kirnberger and Rameau draw this analogy. But walking is subject to considerable variability in tempo. My wife Nancy walks faster than I do, simply because she’s shorter. In any event, neither of these secondary explanations address the evolutionary origin of rhythm as a functional adaptation in its own right.

Justin claims that rhythm and specifically meter are manifestations of a general human capacity for entrainment, that is, our organization of stimuli into symmetrical and recurrent structures. But again, why do we entrain in the first place? Pressing argues that rhythm arises from the evolved cognitive ability to form and use predictive models, especially the timing of future events. Through the feeling of an evenly paced timekeeper, we can anticipate when the next beat will fall, and thus synchronize our actions with the pulse. Rhythm becomes a means of coordinating group behavior among soldiers or hunters, or musicians and dancers. But how does this actually work? What specific evolutionary value does this predictive capacity confer?

Darwin claimed over a hundred years ago that the biological function of rhythm was sexual selection. In 1871 he wrote, “It appears probable that the progenitors of man, before acquiring the power of expressing their love in language, endeavored to charm each other with musical notes and rhythm during the season of courtship.” Just as birdsongs function as courtship
displays to attract sexual mates, Darwin argued that human music evolved to serve a similar purpose. He viewed rhythm not simply as a side effect of higher intelligence, or a manifestation of some generalized cognitive capacity for entrainment or predictive behavior in hunting or warfare, but as the outcome of a specific evolutionary process of sexual selection.

After a century of neglect, Darwin’s exploration of the biology function of rhythm has been revived. Recent studies in the field of evolutionary musicology postulate different hypotheses to explain rhythm as a universal human trait serving an adaptive purpose in the process of human speciation. Over the next few mornings I’ll map out three different theories of the anthropological origin of rhythm—or rhythmogenesis—not in any scholarly detail, but hopefully in a way that gets our synapses charged before the mental calisthenics of the workshops.

We’ve enlisted a tremendous faculty of experts for that purpose, with Chris, Kofi, Pieter, Harald, David, and Justin. Over the past few weeks I’ve read some their work in preparation for the Institute. I can’t say I understand it all, and the parts I understand, I can’t say I agree with it all. But that’s the lawyer in me: I’m purposely trying to instigate debate and even controversy here. As Joel will attest, I really can’t help it. When it comes to the Institute though, I’m the boss. Joel just makes the decisions.

In any case, this promises to be a stimulating event. By the time it’s over, I hope our teachers fare better than John Scotus Eriugena—that’s John “oriuginating” from Scotland, the court schoolmaster of Charles the Bald in the ninth century. John’s students back at the Monastery of Malmesbury found his ideas so medieval they stabbed him to death with their pens. Scholars were evidently less impenetrable back then.

I’d like to close my remarks this morning with a collage of phrases from Virginia Wolff’s collection of essays, The Common Reader. Some are preserved in tact, others slightly altered, and all are out of context. Yet woven together, they set our compass as we begin our voyage at the Institute this year:

So now let us withdraw to our innermost room, and indulge in that strange and pleasant process called “thinking.” To communicate is our chief business, society our chief delight, not merely to acquire knowledge, but to extend our discourse beyond ourselves. To share is our duty, to bring to light hidden thoughts, to give a little, to risk a little, and to pretend nothing. Let our success be measured not by the answers we find, but by the questions we ask. If we are ignorant, to say so, if we doubt, then to wonder out loud. Let us cast about, generous of encouragement, in the give and take of common conversation, on the back of our comrade, in order to reach its farthest shore.

Synchronous Chorusing

Yesterday in David’s workshop I learned that time is infinite, but space is finite. This is a very comforting thought—particularly for people who can never remember where they’ve left things. I gave some thought this year to having a more health conscious program, particularly on day two after all the eating and drinking last night. My wife Nancy is a professional ballet teacher who’s constantly working out, so we considered starting this morning with a little exercise workout for out of shape theorists like me. But then we started to picture what this would be like: “OK, everyone, bend over and touch your waist . . . Now put your hands where you think your hips might be.” Wouldn’t work . . . Besides, I figure if I were supposed to touch my toes, they’d be higher up on my body.

Yesterday I suggested that musical rhythm is an innate human faculty representing some
kind of evolutionary adaptation. This requires that it promote, or at least one time have promoted survival through reproductive selection. In other words, our ability to entrain a rhythmic pulse must confer some distinct biological advantage, and thus have an evolutionary benefit in the process of human development. The question is: what?

A biologist by the name of Björn Merker—some of you might know him—he’s one of the directors of the Institute for Biomusicology in Sweden—has come up with an anthropological theory of rhythmogenesis based on what he calls synchronous chorusing. As I said earlier, rhythmic synchrony, or patterned temporal behavior, is extremely rare in nature. Dogs and wolves howl together, but they can’t do it in unison. Birds and fish move in a unified pattern, but it’s not repeated according to a rhythmic pulse. Only a few life forms—things like crickets, crabs, and frogs—are actually able to chirp, clatter, or croak in unison. The fact that these simple creatures are capable of synchronous chorusing, that’s to say, making noise together in time with a beat, shows that rhythm has nothing to do with a big brain. I’ve never seen a cricket brain, but I doubt it’s very big.

So why do crickets chirp together? The most common explanation is that it serves a reproductive function. It’s a form of sexual advertising by males to attract females, or to quote Paris Hilton, an authority in these matters, it’s hot. Synchronicity might look like male cooperation, but it’s probably just a byproduct of each cricket’s attempt to chirp first. Another explanation is that synchronicity is a defensive strategy to dilute the attention of whatever eats crickets by hiding in a group. Like the second violin, if I chirp in a crowd, no one will notice me.

Merker’s developed a theory of rhythm’s origin based on the synchronous chorusing of chimpanzees. Chimps are our closest living relative and oddly enough the only member of the ape family capable of rhythmic synchrony. I don’t know why gorillas and orangutans can’t keep a beat any more than my aunt, but I’ve learned to live with it.

Anyway, a key element in Merker’s theory is that among chimpanzees, unlike other monkeys, it’s the female rather than the male who moves away from her birth family to find a mate and have kids. This notion of female mobility is what the biologists call female exogamy. What it means is that girl chimps, like my two daughters, basically get bored at home and wander off looking for boys. The boy chimps, on the other hand, band together in groups staking out different turfs in the jungle. Aside from fighting for food, what they like to do is compete against each other to attract girls.

For Merker, this element of male group sexual rivalry and territorial competition is what accounts for the biological origin of rhythm. It establishes the evolutionary role of synchronous chorusing in man’s emergence from our common ancestor with the chimp, and thus explains why we’re having this Institute in the first place. Merker contends that male synchronous chorusing among chimpanzees, and hence among our hominid ancestors as well, serves a selective sexual function. By timing their hoots in unison, the chimps basically increase their collective amplitude to attract exogamous females. Is that a word? What’s another word for thesaurus?

The synchronized whooping and screeching, usually triggered by the discovery of a big fruit tree or other source of food, extends the geographical reach of their peak signal output to all those girls roaming around beyond their territorial boundaries. This group noise level is further increased by synchronized stomping or dancing, linking the rhythm of synchronous chorusing to the evolutionary changes of bipedalism and upright posture. This collective signal conveys the presence of group resources, social cooperation, and vocal skills, all of which are of considerable
interest to discerning young females shopping around to decide where and with whom to settle.

The louder and more repetitive noise invariably attracts them to the site of the commotion, and thus enhances the survival of chimps with some rhythmic capacity over their less rhythmic competitors. The broadcasting of synchronous hooting evidencing male cooperation also functions as an intimidating deterrent against the encroachment of other males, and a warning against predators. The aggregate sound of sixteen chimpanzees hooting and stamping in unison is not only impressive, but scary too.

The highlight of Merker’s theory is his live demonstration, which I won’t do. He stomps around all hunched over like an ape whooping it up as loud as he can. It’s quite colorful, although when I saw it in Belgium, the only reaction he seemed to elicit from the females, and everyone else for that matter, was more like heavy laughing than heavy breathing.

Despite synchronous chorusing among a group of chimps, when you get one of them alone, mano a mano—or maybe mono a mono—he’s incapable of true rhythmic behavior. A single chimp is mentally and physically unable to keep a beat even with training, which reminds me of someone else I know.

So according to Merker, our propensity to join a repetitive beat is the remnant of our ancestors’ successful ability to synchronize mating calls as a biological trait. Rhythmic entrainment served the evolutionary function of decibel summation through synchronized multimale chorusing, generating greater reproductive advantage over arrhythmic rivals. Those best able to coordinate their shouting and dancing together based on the predictive pattern of an isochronic beat were more successful than their competitors in attracting mates and thus reproducing.

But if we have male cooperation to win among competing clans, how was the struggle played out within the group after they lured the females to their home court? Apparently, even within the synchronized chorusing of male chimpanzees, certain individuals try to distinguish themselves from their competitors within the ensemble by rubato rhythmic effects, entering slightly before or after the beat. Once the females were safely within the group, our primitive ancestors had frenetic nocturnal social gatherings—somewhat like our reception last night—but where they engaged in orgiastic singing and dancing for the purpose of individual mating. This provided an arena for competitive mating tactics through creative performances and behavioral displays designed to attract the attention of the opposite sex.

In short, virtuosity counts. One scholar claiming that music had the power to “melt the heart of an ovulating ancestor” cites the case of Jimi Hendrix as modern example of the reproductive value of rhythmic virtuosity. Hendrix’s death at the age of 27 proves that his musical talents obviously did little to help his chances of survival. But he apparently had sexual relations with hundreds of groupies. Under primitive conditions, he would have fathered innumerable children. Hendrix’s musical genes would have proliferated through the power of attracting sexual admirers.

Merker’s theory also accounts for the considerable advance in human brain size since our first ancestor appeared roughly two million years ago. The sexual value of rhythmic precision among competing primates was a key factor in promoting the expansion of human learning capacity and musical creativity. In order to impress a discriminating partner, there was pressure to come up with and master new and more creative gestures. The demand for rhythmic virtuosity as a mating tactic in the paleolithic dating scene generated a spiral of creativity and brain expansion.

Rhythm was also an important factor accelerating the perfection of upright posture and
bipedal locomotion. Those who could stand on two legs were especially impressive dancers.
Their movements were more sophisticated and attractive to a mate than some dumb monkey
crawling around on all fours. Upright aroused male dancers were more erotic for other obvious
reasons as well—a subject upon which I shall not elaborate further.

Merker’s theory, in short, explains rhythm not as a mere byproduct of higher intelligence,
but a pragmatic human trait permitting predictive coordinated behavior in order to maximize
survival. By synchronizing their vocalizations, our early ancestors were able to shout together
and thereby increase their total amplitude, which gave them a reproductive advantage over others
in attracting sexual partners. Individuals within the group demonstrating rhythmic proficiency in
turn had greater competitive advantage in mating.

If you can accept this evolutionary trajectory from chimps to Tchaikovsky, and crickets to
Krebs, then we’ve got one explanation why each us, no matter when or where we’ve lived over
the past million years or so—with the possible exception of the Yenta tribe of suburban
Detroit—can quite simply do this [clap, clap, clap].

So Percussion

We’re fortunate to have an outstanding group called So Percussion here this evening to
perform some of the music of our special guest, Steve Reich. Steve and I both agreed it would be
appropriate to begin our plenary session with some music. After that we’ll have a short time to
ask our performers a few questions. Then Steve and I will have an informal discussion in the
form of an interview for about 45 minutes.

We’ve tried to incorporate some of your questions, and others I’ve come up with myself.
After that, we’ll hear a CD of Steve’s latest piece, You Are (Variations), which runs about 30
minutes. I previously circulated a pdf version of the unpublished score, which Steve and his
publisher Boosey & Hawkes graciously provided. At the end we’ll have plenty of time for some
open questions for Steve from the floor.

So Percussion is one of the most exciting young ensembles in the country. The New York
Times calls them “brilliant” and “consistently impressive.” They’ve performed at Carnegie Hall,
Bang on a Can Marathon, BAM Next Wave Festival, the Cleveland Museum of Art and
numerous other venues, and have conducted educational residencies at the University of Texas,
Princeton, Duke, Williams College, King’s College and elsewhere. They received the Chamber
Music America/ASCAP Adventurous Programming award for their performance of
contemporary music, and their first two albums are available on Cantaloupe Music.

The group describes its mission in these words: “Percussion,” they write, “has a unique
ability to thrill and captivate. Its expressive possibilities range far beyond beats and rhythms,
speaking to the impact of sound on our very lives. A So performance seeks to convey this
impact. From the pure joy of drumming to the strange beauty of everyday objects, audiences are
uniquely moved and entertained by this total immersion in sound and imagination. So is a form
of the Japanese verb meaning, ‘to play.’ For us, it means sharing the joy and spirit of
musicmaking with whomever we can!”

Tonight we’ll hear two of Steve’s early and important works, Music for Pieces of Wood and
Drumming Part I, which will balance our later listening to his most recent piece and give us a
sense how his music has evolved. I’m happy to present Doug Perkins, Adam Sliwinski, Jason
Treuting, Lawson White, and David Schotzko, the distinguished members of So Percussion.
Reich Introduction

A few years ago I was asked by an online music encyclopedia called Musica Viva to write an entry for Steve Reich. Here’s what I wrote: At a time when composition was dominated by atonal chromaticism, relentless dissonance, irregular rhythms, disjunct leaps, perpetual variation, and inaudible complexity, Reich reasserted in a compelling and radical way music's fundamental roots in diatonicism, consonance, pulse, linear motion, repetition, and audibility itself. This infusion of these normative and to an extent universal musical impulses injected fresh life into a shriveling compositional scene dominating by chromatic and arrhythmic experimentation. It reopened musical doors too long shut. In an age of dissonance, Reich emancipated the consonance. As one composer said, we can finally use meter again.

Reich’s challenge to midcentury musical orthodoxy had a revolutionary impact signalling the end of high modernism. While not all composers followed his lead quite as aggressively—nor need they once a path was lit—he allowed those of us who still love atonal masterpieces to turn its page and reconnect with a rich tonal and rhythmic heritage extending back not only to Perotin, but Haydn and Bach, and laterally to Bill Evans, the talking drum, and just plain singing in the rain.

I’ve known Steve for nearly thirty years. We met at Morton Feldman’s June in Buffalo program back in 1976. Each summer, Feldman invited a group of outstanding composers to conduct informal seminars, in some ways a precursor for this Institute. Steve came along with Xenakis and Crumb. I was determined to get to know him and learn as much about his music as I could.

I hung out in Steve and Beryl’s loft in Soho in the late 70s and heard rehearsals of Music for 18 Musicians. I wanted nothing more than to be in his ensemble, but my rhythm wasn’t precise enough. This was before the computer, so I eventually became Steve’s copystist instead, generating handwritten parts for Octet and then Variations from his notebook score. We worked together well, and at times I like to think he even considered some of my minor musical suggestions. After that we’d meet every now and then for lunch in Ellen’s Coffee Shop across from City Hall. Nancy and I were honored to take part in a celebration of Steve and Berly’s son’s wedding at their house. Over a quarter century we’ve always managed to keep in touch.

I’d say the most unusual composer I’ve ever known was probably Feldman—he was one of a kind. But the composer who I admire most, who I think has most shaped the course of music for me and our generation is Steve. Boulez once said that when he first heard Webern, he knew it was the music of his time. The moment I heard Music for 18 I knew it was the music of our time. To quote Evelyn Waugh, it has charm, and charm for me is everything, or nearly everything. Steve has done something I said, not all he will do, nor all he can do, but something. I felt significant simply because I knew him.

The hardest part about being Steve’s friend has been continuing my own composing. He carved out something original, and ultimately I had to come to terms with the fact that glimmering repeating patterns was Steve’s thing, not mine. Like Charlie Parker, no one could do it better. I had to find a way around Steve, a way to be me. I felt the same around him as I did around Carl Schachter. As Charles Lamb put it, “too frequent doses of his creativity restrained what lesser portion of that faculty I possessed of my own.” I could derive thoughts from Steve, but my way of thinking had to be my own. My task was not to copy him, but to copy what he had done: to be fully me, just as he was fully him. I learned to write music that was not as original, but was authentically my own.
The truth is that very few of us come up with a really new idea. Feldman once said you’re lucky if you have one important idea in your whole life. Schoenberg had an idea, Debussy had an idea, Cage had an idea—and Steve has an idea. Most of us work with other people’s ideas, expanding them, analyzing them, and in some cases even avoiding them. So in the end, it seems more important to discover our own musical identity than to come up with a new idea, and have the courage to really be ourselves.

And that’s a lesson I’ve learned from Steve. He has the conviction to be himself. His music has what Borges once called a “ferocious integrity.” Someone once asked Feldman how he could possibly like Xenakis’s music, because it was so different from his own. He said Xenakis spoke with a personal voice, and that’s all that counts.

Steve speaks with a personal voice, and for me, that’s what counts. But it’s more than this. It’s not only his own voice, but has become a larger resonant voice in the world itself. Steve is one of the most original musical thinker of our time. Only a few living composers can legitimately claim to have altered the course of music history, and he’s one of them.

And this no doubt is why he’s the recipient of this year’s Edward McDowell Medal, awarded to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to the arts, celebrated later this summer with a public performance by So Percussion of the same music we just heard in our exclusive private session tonight. I’m extremely grateful to Steve, not only for what he’s accomplished and the lesson he unwittingly taught me as a composer, but for being a good and valued friend for so many years. We’re all honored to have him here. Please give a warm welcome to Steve Reich.

Reich Interview


1. You indicate that unlike composition, music theory describes the past (p. vii). Since you are addressing a group of theorists, can you discuss the relationship between theory and practice? What is the proper role of music theory as you see it? What is its use as well as its limitations?
2. Early on you made a decision not to pursue an academic career. You indicate that the best teachers may “lack the single-minded focus on a particular way of writing music a stronger composer may have” (p. 143). Can you elaborate on your attitude toward teaching and composing?
3. You wrote that *Music for 18 Musicians* was “consciously composed with a feeling of liberating myself from strict strictures” (p. 94). You moved from what you called a “didactic quality” in your earlier phase pieces which perceptibly show “how the music is made” to incorporate other aspects involving “questions of taste with no other justification.” You also note that “even the pure process pieces” are based on some “aesthetic decisions” (p. 92). Can you elaborate on this tension and transition in your work?
4. You’ve written regarding tempo and the number of repetitions in your music that “there is latitude, but there are limits to that latitude” (p. 97). How do you conceive of the role of limitations and constraints in your music generally, and the tensions between latitude versus limits, or between “strict strictures” as you put it, and creative freedom?
5. Unlike your early pieces that have an unspecified number of repetitions, beginning with *Octet* in 1979 you write the repetitions out. In *Nagoya Marimbas* and more recent work you limit the number of repetitions of a pattern to three (p. 184). How has your conception of the number of
appropriate repetitions changed over time, and is this essentially an intuitive decision on your part?

6. Much has been written by you and others about your approach to rhythm and melody, but I’d like to address your conception of harmony and harmonic progression. Although your internal chord structures are often based on 4ths and 5ths, you seem to favor a more ambiguous harmonic root movements by thirds, as in Desert Music (p. 121), rather than traditional dominant-tonic or subdominant-tonic tonal progressions and cadences. How does this relate to the conception and role of harmony in your music? For example, how did you construct the cycle of 11 chords in Music for 18 Musicians? Potter give a quasi-functional analysis in F# minor and A major. Do view this as a goal-directed progression, an ambiguous shifting background of colors, or what?

7. Although diatonicism is central to your music, over the years there has been an increasing use of chromaticism, as in Tehillim, Desert Music, Sextet, and quite extensively in City Life. Can you elaborate on the situations and contexts in which you tend to use chromaticism?

8. You cite some isolated instances of extended repetition in Bach’s C major Prelude and Wagner’s das Rheingold (p. 130), as well as the serial repetition of the row as early examples of repetition as a musical technique. Can you elaborate on the centrality of repetition as an aesthetic and not just structural element in your music, and the importance of the idea expressed in Desert Music using William Carlos Williams’ text “It is a principle of music to repeat the theme. Repeat and repeat again as the pace mounts. The theme is difficult, but no more difficult than the facts to be resolved” (p. 125-26)?

9. Several people here are African music scholars. Citing its use of downbeats in simultaneous patterns that don’t coincide, you indicate that the central lesson of African music for you was the relationship between ambiguity and repetition (p. 150, 106). How indebted is your music to the structure of African music?

10. Several people here are experts in German romantic songs. In your essay on Chamber Music discussing the type of musicians best suited to perform your music, you compare rhythm based on “a fixed pulse” and “a firm sense of regular time” found in most non-Western music, jazz, and early music to “the more gestural rhythm found in German romantic music” (p. 156). Can you elaborate on this distinction?

11. You’ve said that “serial and 12-tone music were a kind of break with natural principles of resonance and with human musical perception” (p. 159), and that your music represents a “restoration” of certain fundamental, universal qualities, such as a steady pulse, consonance, and the intervallic primacy of fourths, fifths, and octaves. You also indicated that “any theory of music that eliminates these realities is doomed to a marginal role in the music of the world” (p. 186-87). Can you elaborate on your concept of musical fundamentals and natural principles? Do you view the historically rooted musical elements and traditional conventions, such as the diatonic scale, triadic harmony, and metered pulse, although not inherently absolute, nonetheless acquire over time some superiority, legitimacy, necessity, and authority of their own over others that might merely be created or invented?

12. In discussing The Cave, you cite the importance of “popular sources” and “popular culture” (p. 161), and trace its historical influence in serious music as far back as dance forms in Bach suites and Renaissance masses (p. 168, 174). You state that “the wall between serious and popular music was erected primarily by Schoenberg and his followers” and “since the late 1960s, this wall has gradually crumbled” (p. 168). You also note a solid tradition of American composers like Ives, Gershwin, and Copland who “stayed in touch with the popular music of [their] time” (p. 165), and indicate that “when composers look down on all the popular music
around them, they are generally suffering from some sort of emotional disorder” (p. 174). Elsewhere you write that “the art music of a nation or culture normally tends to reflect its folk music. When that ceases to happen you have the musically unhealthy situation that pertained in American art music in the 1950s and ‘60s when it lost all connections to American folk music (read jazz and rock and roll) and instead self-consciously modeled itself on European serial models instead.” (p. 194). Can you elaborate on the role of popular music in shaping your compositional aesthetic?

13. Several people here are Stravinsky scholars. Some have noted a certain similarity of texture and rhythm between some of your music and certain static layered passages in Stravinsky, such as the opening to Petrushka to cite one example. What impact did your encounter with Stravinsky have and how do you view him today?

14. In writing about modern opera, you single out Kurt Weill, generally overlooked in the classical tradition, especially the Threepenny Opera of 1928, as pointing to the future, in contrast to Alban Berg, generally praised in the classical tradition, especially Wozzeck of 1921, as pointing to the past. Weill and Berg both composed under what you call “the shadow of the death of German romanticism,” but while “Berg is looking backward, Weill instead does an about-face and looks to contemporary popular forms as material for music theatre” (p. 167-68). As you know, this contradicts the conventional party line. Can you elaborate?

15. Speech melody has been an important feature of much of your work over the past several decades. Is there a tension between the steady rhythm of a regular pulse in repeating musical patterns and the more “natural” or fluid rhythm of speech patterns? Does this require some sort of “regularization” of speech patterns?

16. In describing the relationship between your music the prevailing style of the 1950s and ‘60s, you indicate you “sometimes see both serial music and Cage as influencing my music [by] suggesting that any radical organization is possible, on the one hand, and on the other, forcing me back on my own rhythmic and tonal inclinations that received no satisfaction whatever from either of these musics. Serialism and Cage gave me something to push against” (p. 159). Can you elaborate on this, and how you see serialism and Cage today?

17. Three Tales “reflects on the growth and implications of technology during the twentieth century [and the growing] debate about the physical, ethical, and religious nature of the expanding technological environment “(p. 204). Your portrayal of the crash of the Hindenburg, the atom bomb test at Bikini, and the genetically engineered cloning of Dolly the sheep present “different attitudes toward the science and technology we so avidly embrace”—both positive and negative. This piece and some of your other large recent works are heavily dependent upon technology itself. How would you address this tension in your own music?

Motherese

You know, even though this is the fifth Institute, each year I get so nervous about the whole thing, my bicuspid aortic value starts throbbing so much I feel like I’m gonna die—but at least I could do that lying down. I start thinking rejected applicants hate my guts, Mannes will throw me out of the school for lousy student evaluations, and some workshop leader won’t give out reading assignments on time.

I gave up talking to my psychiatrist when he told me you’ve got to crazy to live in New York in the first place. So I decided to try yoga and meditation. I went to this Indian guru someplace in the village and he says, “Wayne, don’t worry about the Institute. Life is an illusion.
Nothing exists.” When I got home I thought, if this guy’s right, I really overpaid for my upholstery.

So the next time I said, “Listen, swami, I’m still worried about the Institute. Can you help me relax?” He says, “Yes, Wayne, breathe in, breathe out . . . breathe in, breathe out . . . breathe in, breathe out . . .” I’m thinking, if I can’t do that, the Institute’s the least of my problems.

By the way, a few days ago I said half-heartedly that the lawyer in me is purposely trying to instigate debate and even controversy here as a legitimate mode of inquiry. I don’t mind lawyer jokes since I’m no longer one of them, but I’m actually not kidding. This happened to some extent in Kofi’s workshop yesterday, where I defiantly opposed Kofi’s and seemingly the rest of the group’s assertion that the African’s interpretation of his music has any more validity than mine. I reserved the right to assess that view, even though I’m not African. I reserved the right to assess that view, even though I’m not African. I was arguing in a sense against Clifford Geertz’s fashionable postmodern notion of local knowledge—a position very effectively stated by Ernst Gellner. This triggered an extensive debate involving several participants in the workshop, in which I could have quite easily argued the other side.

It’s probably because of my training and experience in legal advocacy rather than any personality trait that I believe what the Sophists called “antilogy”—deliberately arguing both sides of an issue—is a good thing and not a bad one. Rather than inducing paralysis or contentiousness, I believe it undermines self-satisfaction and encourages closer reflection and open judgment. The give and take of multiple perspectives tests the strength of our ideas in the crucible of conversation.

I wasn’t trying to simply be provocative, but rather flush out what I believe were methodological assumptions and issues beneath the surface. Their excavation required some digging, and that happened primarily through collegial opposition. This mode of participatory and to some extent competitive and combative discourse at the Institute revives the classical tradition of rhetoric and forensic debate practiced by Cicero and Demosthenes centuries ago. This is the pragmatic arena in which Quintillian’s prose rhythm that we’re studying in David’s workshop was put to the test, measured not just in terms of its eloquence, but its persuasiveness.

While Socrates via Plato condemned the Sophists for unnecessary and duplicitous argumentation—as perhaps some my colleagues may have perceived me—Gorgias’ delivery of speeches on opposite sides of the same topic invited and even thrust the audience—in this case, the workshop—into the process of reexamination and decisionmaking. As a result, I believe a more probing discussion ensued, in which my own views were reevaluated through the demands of articulation and confrontation as well.

And from a larger perspective, while the Institute may be condemned perhaps for being socially and professionally elitist—restricted to those of some scholarly rank and achievement—within those bounds I would assert that it is epistemologically democratic, and by potential, radically so, in its modality that everyone contributes to the construction of contingent truth as a collaborative intellectual enterprise.

Yesterday I discussed the idea that musical rhythm is an anthropological adaptation promoting survival through the phenomenon of synchronous chorusing. By coordinating their screeches with an isochronic beat, our primitive ancestors could increase their collective amplitude to better attract sexual mates, and thereby enhance their reproductive success. This theory assumes, however, that male sexuality constitutes the essential driving force in rhythmogenesis, even though it’s female choice—as in my house—that triggers the ultimate consummation.
The anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake has come up with an alternate explanation of the evolutionary origin of rhythm. She argues that rhythm evolved from proto-musical interactions between mother and infant in the early nurturing process. The gurgling and cooing that goes on in the post-natal setting consists of temporally patterned sounds which create an emotional communion or affiliative bond between mother and child. Dissanayake claims this is a survival-enhancing mechanism that ultimately lays the ground for social cooperation among adults. Rather than male sexual competition or adult courtship, the evolutionary antecedents and purpose of rhythm lie in our earliest socialization in the crib.

Dissanayake is not referring to childhood lullabies or singing, but rather ritualized packages of sequential and rhythmically patterned behavior—vocal, facial, and kinesthetic—suffused with emotional and perceptual salience between mothers and infants under six months of age. These not only attract and charm us as Darwin suggested, but teach us to coordinate our emotions and interactions with another person. They promote the conjoinment necessary for empathetic relations with others as adults, and our psychic connection with the world at large.

This theory of rhythmogenesis is predicated on the assumption that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny, that is, the existential development of the single individual recapitulates the evolutionary development of the species as a whole. We don’t have a primitive humanoid around, but we do have a human infant and from it we can draw conclusions about the infancy of the species. The baby, as it were, relives our origins, and its behavior provides a rear window into our evolutionary past.

Dissanayake’s theory is grounded in the physical helplessness or altriciality of humans at birth. Unlike other mammals, human offspring are incapable of fending for themselves. In fact, according to my Uncle Morris—he’s Aunt Harriet’s equally senile husband back in Detroit—the human fetus only becomes viable upon acceptance into medical school. OK, what’s the difference between a Rottweiler and a Jewish mother? Eventually, the Rottweiler lets go.

Anyway, the prolonged infancy of the human offspring is generally attributed to the conflict between bipedal locomotion and expanded brain size during the course of human evolution. Upright posture induced a narrowing of the birth canal in the female. But this conflicted with the necessity for a larger skull to accommodate increased brain capacity. The evolutionary compromise was that human babies were born prematurely, while they still had small enough heads to fit through the birth canal. This prematurity in mental capacity accounts for their extended dependency as infants—and in some cases beyond.

This anthropological trend toward juvenile helplessness in turn created a selective evolutionary pressure for more intensive maternal care and bonding within the mother-infant dyad. This resulted in the development of rhythmic and temporally patterned ritualized interactions, creating heightened interest and attunement, and fostering greater intimacy and affiliation. Maternal movements and utterances like cooing, nodding, clapping, swaying, smiling, eyebrow raising and so forth, became simplified, exaggerated, and above all, repeated.

These various sounds and gestures known as motherese — though it could apply to paternal primary care give as well—are composed of rudimentary musical elements in that they are melodic, temporal, and have rhythmic regularity and variety, including pauses or rests, dynamic variation, and alterations of tempo and timbre. Although semantically meaningful words are often used, to the baby these aren’t verbal messages but musical sounds and symbolic behavior.

Dissanayake calls them “interactive affiliative communicative mechanisms based on sequentially organized signals that create sympathetic attunement and communion.” This proto-musical interaction within the mother-infant dialogue develops sensitivities and competencies,
incipient in other primates, that provide a foundation for the temporal art of music. This includes our perception of anticipation and fulfillment of beginnings and endings, implications and realizations, antecedents and consequents, qualifications and subordinations, and things like contrast, redirection, opposition, play, pacing, climax, and release. All of these refinements unfold in the primitive rhythmic polyphony between parent and child in the first few months of life.

Mother-infant dialogue is thus not only the evolutionary origin and prototype for musical behavior according to this theory, but the nursery for our interactive capacities with each other, and our affinity with the world at large. The same skills that go into making music are what make this Institute tick—the social rhythms of talking and listening, working and playing, group-time versus self-time, the metrics of group interaction, turntaking, and our sensitivity and entrainment to each other as people.

So now we’ve got two competing theories of the anthropological origin of rhythm—one based on the sexual value of screaming, and another based on the emotional value of gurgling. This is the current state of the field. I didn’t anticipate it would be so, well, autobiographical. Tomorrow I’ll explore the anthropology of rhythm from the perspective of neurology and the chemistry of the brain itself.

Musical Performance

One of the best things about teaching at Mannes is the incredible level of musical talent we get from all parts of the world. It’s a little weird dissecting two measures with someone who can play Rachmaninoff’s third by heart. But there’re always some wonderful classroom moments to remember. One girl told me her favorite piece was the Taco Bell Canon. Another thought a virtuoso was a musician with high moral standards. The best was a paper I got that said Bach wrote many compositions and had a large number of children. In between, he practiced on an old spinster he kept in the attic.

Anyway, today we’re honored to have a performance by one of the smartest and most talented students at Mannes, our own Administrative Coordinator, Ilya Yakushev. This is his second year helping with the Institute, and all I can say is, he’s extremely competent at everything he does. And what he does best is play piano.

Ilya is from St. Petersburg and is one of Vladimir Feltsman’s top students. He won the 2004 Mannes Concerto Competition and performed this past fall at Alice Tully Hall at Lincoln Center. Even though the rest of us are struggling to maintain consciousness at this early hour, Ilya will play Prokofiev’s Third Piano Sonata, and then hopefully answer a few questions about the challenges of performing such rhythmically dazzling music. After the Institute he’ll perform this piece along with several others at the World Piano Competition in Cincinnati.

We’ve given each of you a copy of the score so you can follow along and identify specific passages you might want to talk about. So let’s welcome Ilya Yakushev to the stage for a very special performance of Prokofiev’s Third Sonata for Piano.

Solipsism

I want to confess right up front that I nicked myself shaving this morning. I’ve spent the past few hours applying various ointments, salves, and irrigational techniques to shore up the embarrassing flow of red corpuscles down my chin. I don’t want to over personalize this, but I
didn’t want anyone here to think that this blow was sustained in an altercation last night with the restaurant manager over lousy service and abrasive music, or even worse, self-inflicted out of encroaching depression that after today, the only authority I’ll have for the next year will be over my dog.

We’ve got a little time left, so I’d like to polish off my anthropological triptych by discussing the theory of Walter Freeman, a neurobiologist who goes beyond the aesthetic, the cognitive, and the cultural, to the chemistry of rhythm itself. The centerpiece of Freeman’s approach is what he calls epistemological solipsism or our innate condition of neurological solitude. Rhythm evolved, he says, as an antidote to our loneliness. We reach out to each other through the mutual act of synchronization, and thus come to trust each other and transcend our own autonomy.

Freeman claims that isolation is neurologically hardwired into our brains themselves. He uses the term “solipsism” not in the sense of being so self-centered as to believe everyone else is merely a projection of your own imagination, but rather that knowledge is subjectively constructed. Learning and perception are not passive acts of acquiring objective data, but active processes of engagement shaped by our own mental operations. As we age and become more individuated, our neural pathways become increasingly unique and individuated as well. As our knowledge increases by selective learning, our brains grow progressively apart from each other because of the particularity of our experiences and the subjective knowledge we each construct. We recognize that other minds as well as the world itself must exist, but we can never escape our own cranium.

For Freeman, the basic problem in overcoming this psychic solipsism is not translating or mapping knowledge from one brain to another, but in establishing mutual trust through shared intentional actions. For human society and a communal reality to exist at all, this psychological gulf must somehow be surmounted.

Rhythm for Freeman evolved as a social mechanism to bridge this gap by inducing a sense of barrier dissolution and oneness with others and the world around us. Repetitive pulsing has a hypnotic effect causing us to transcend ourselves. This same effect—Freeman calls it a psychic meltdown—can be achieved by other stimulants as well, such as sex or drugs, which trigger the release of neurohormones in the brain.

A sexual climax, for example, releases a neuropeptide called oxytocin into the basal forebrain, causing a breakdown of our sense of autonomy. I’m sure you can get it down in the village. Alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine all induce the neurochemical correlates of subjective meltdown or release, as do extreme exercise, sleep deprivation, sudden grief, starvation, and certain back issues of the *Journal of Music Theory*. Personally, I’m unfamiliar with the effects of extreme exercise, though sleep deprivation and I have become good friends. And the only thing I know about marijuana is it causes amnesia, and other things I can’t remember.

Freeman claims that a rhythmic pulse alters the chemistry of our cortex in a similar fashion. It causes a release of neurohormones creating an altered state of consciousness in which our normal sense of personal autonomy dissolves. The cognitive meltdown induced by rhythm, like sex and drugs, is a sort of neurological massage that weakens our inhibitions and promotes reciprocity, sympathy, and mutual understanding.

Music in preliterate tribes, especially rhythmic drumming, clapping, and chanting where people sing and dance in a hypnotic trance to the point of physical and psychological exhaustion, is designed to dissolve individuality and create communal bonding and spiritual exaltation. There’s an element of this psychic meltdown and group consciousness in rock music, minimal
music, and even the rhythmic chanting at sports events. By acting together in unison, we transcend our isolation and feel part of something larger than ourselves. Through rhythm we overcome our sense of separation and achieve communion with one another. We become more receptive to the group and its goals.

This is the function not only of tribal rituals, but of religious chants, military marches, and patriotic anthems as well. By clapping, singing, or moving together in a synchronized manner, we identify with each other, and feel one with the sports team, the school, the nation, or the deity. The strongest basis for social bonding and cooperation lies in rhythmically repeated actions and vocalizations, since they’re predictable by others who can anticipate and thus participate collectively in accordance with group expectations.

Rhythm, according to Freeman, is a wordless, intuitive, and physical means of barrier dissolution by greasing our synapses and breaking down subjectivity. It forges a sense of mutuality and allegiance, ultimately facilitating the possibility of coherent collective action, the process of socialization, and the formation of human institutions.

It’s the darker side of rhythm’s power to degrade rational minds, unravel morals, and subvert an established social order that caused Plato to ban it from his academy, and the church to suppress syncopation. Carried to an extreme, the steady pounding of a drum can lead warriors to destruction and their own demise, and turn orderly civilians into a mob, inciting riot, slaughter, and even suicide.

Rhythm, by this last account, is social glue, originated through the biological evolution of brain chemistry to overcome our own solitude. It’s a human technology, an audible liquor discovered by our earliest ancestors, to span the gulf between us, if only temporarily, through the collective euphoria of the beat.

And that’s why at the beginning of our journey I said that the topic of this year’s Institute has a lot to do with the Institute itself. Through our collective drumming these past four days, in the persistent intensity of our pulse, we begin to transcend our individual differences and sense our part in a larger community. We feel a shedding of our professional solipsism, our inhibition and pride through a comparable sort of barrier dissolution. We begin to identify with and listen to each other more as members of an intellectual ensemble instead of soloistic scholars, sharing our attunement and affiliation as an organic workshop, a think tank with a unified objective and multiple voices.

And if I correctly understand the guru who told me it’s all in the breath, we may through the ancient antidote of rhythm shed an illusion of our ego, and if only temporarily, become one thinking mind, an integral consciousness, like Aristotle’s God, of thought itself.

Spanning the seemingly insurmountable gulf between us, we too can finally bask, like the Bantu, the Balinese, and the Burgundian, in the richly textured polyphony and resultant patterns of our own music, riding along with Virginia Wolff on the back of our comrades, to glimpse its farthest shore.

Closing Ceremony

It’s time to bring the fifth Mannes Institute to a close. This was a challenging and rewarding experience, and one I’m delighted not only to have made possible, but be part of myself. I thank you for contributing to our success. People have said a lot of wonderful things about the Institute that make me feel really good. In fact, Justin told me that the only thing standing between the Institute and greatness is me.
Before we disband, I’d like to express our appreciation to our faculty, Kofi, Chris, Pieter, Harald, David, and Justin. They each brought something unique and special to this event, and we all learned a great deal from them. There’s no question that the Institute’s ability to attract outstanding scholars like you is a tribute to their intellectual stature and collegial rapport. They confronted the daunting challenge of leading workshops before an intimidating group of peers, and have done it with impeccable grace and skill. Future faculty members will be held to the same high standards. I’d like to ask these six distinguished scholars and colleagues to please stand for a round of applause.

Within their ranks, I’d especially like to acknowledge Harald and Justin. As co-chairs of this year’s faculty, they helped me organize this event from the ground up, select the faculty and participants, and make innumerable decisions along the way. I discovered why they’re not only outstanding scholars and wonderful colleagues, but leaders in our field. They are both committed, calm (especially Harald), and chipper (especially Justin). This was a particularly demanding assignment this year. To be honest, I simply couldn’t have done this without them. We’re all indebted to them, so let’s thank them again.

I’d like to remind everyone to fill out your Institute Evaluation Sheet in your conference packet and be sure to give it to me or Ilya before you leave. You can also mail them to me, or preferably even use your own university letterhead. But please do. If you enjoyed this experience, please take the time and effort to share your thoughts. It means a lot to me and the others who made this happen. I’m pleased to say that one of your esteemed colleagues last year, Dan Harrison, wrote that the Institute has become one of the most significant professional credentials in our field.

Next year’s program will be an Institute on Chromaticism with Pat McCreless, Dan Harrison, Charles Smith, Deborah Stein, Richard Kramer, David Kopp, and Greg Proctor as special guest. We’re exploring the possibility of taking the Institute on the road by holding 2006 at Yale just for a temporary change of venue. In 2007 we’ll be back at Mannes for an Institute on Schoenberg and His Legacy with Andy Mead, Severine Neff, and other experts in that area, with Allen Forte as our special guest. Plans are also afoot for a Jazz and Pop Institute, a Cognition and Perception Institute, a Recent Music Institute, and an Aesthetics Institute as well. Each year a different subject is explored, and new proposals are welcome. What we need is a core group of six outstanding scholars working in a particular area of broad enough interest to form a faculty and attract our peers.

I urge each of you to tell your friends and colleagues about the Institute, and encourage them to join us in the future. If you know anyone who applied before and was rejected, please urge them to try again. Our purpose is to establish greater communication and collegiality throughout all branches of our profession, and to give all scholars an opportunity to come together in an interdisciplinary context. As you can see, this year we’ve broadened out to include many more midlevel and junior scholars, and we expect to continue to be more inclusive in the future.

My final task is to present each of you with your diploma evidencing your membership in the Institute, which I’ll do as theatrically as possible, by asking you to come up and walk across the stage. Although we’re all teachers, here we’re students too and we need to graduate. So as Director of this noble enterprise, I hereby call the roll of newly admitted fellows into our ranks. As I read your name aloud, please come up to receive your diploma. And let’s make the first group our outstanding faculty: Kofi Agawu, David Cohen, Chris Hasty, Harald Krebs, Justin London, and Pieter van den Toorn. And now the graduating class of 2005:

THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON CHROMATICISM

June 22-25, 2006
Yale University
New Haven, Connecticut

Hyphenation

Good morning everyone and welcome to the 2006 Mannes Institute. This event has become successful enough to go on the road, and I’m pleased that Yale has provided us with a new haven. Samuel Johnson once told Boswell, “if you’re tired of London, you’re tired of life.” Well, I’m not tired of New York, I’m sometimes tired of life, but I’m happy to be here. Since this is the first Institute for many of you, you probably don’t know what to expect. Actually, I’m not sure either. If you ask me what’s in store, I’d refer you to don Quixote. Quixote tells Sancho Panza about Orbaneja, el pintor de Úbeda, the painter of Úbeda. When asked what he was painting, Orbaneja replied lo que saliere—whatever comes out.

Over the next four days, we’ll paint a picture of chromaticism, adding one quixotic brushstroke to the next, and what we’ll create, as Orbaneja said, is lo que saliere—whatever comes out. Our goal is not to brush up chromaticism and make it tidy, but to decompose it and get under its skin. Let’s give chase and hound down its foxes through debate and the juxtaposition of multiple perspectives. Our bugle call is Diderot’s admonition, “that which is not questioned, remains unproved.”

I must confess that coming to New Haven, or back for some of us, posed a problem for the name of this year’s event. To be institutionally correct, I had to work in the names of both schools. I ended up going with Mannes Institute at Yale, but tweaked it a bit by using the @ sign like an email address. That made it a little more fun, a word not often associated with academia. The encircled “at” beat out the more obvious Mannes-Yale Institute, simply because I couldn’t deal with the hyphen.

Chronic hyphenation is symptomatic of our time. The eighteenth century, I’m told, had a rhetorical prejudice against the hyphen, which it considered undignified and lower class. Dr. Johnson hyphenates hood-wink and mocking-stock, but not a whole lot else. Now though, these
“uncouth noun clumps”—that’s Nicholson Baker’s term—are sprouting up everywhere, shoving two words into one. Like Marx’s idea of capitalism, or one view of the leading tone, the hyphen culminates in its own demise by eventually producing a single unhyphenated compound. *Backseat*, for instance, started life as two words like rows in a car, evolved to hyphenation, and then fused into a single word. Ditto for *secondhand*. Baker thinks our decision to hyphenate or not should reflect the meaning of the word itself. For the sake of metaphorical accuracy, he says the normally conjoined *pantyhose* warrants a “tasty spandex hyphen.” On the other hand, he praises the semantic symbolism in Joyce’s unhyphenated shrinkage of, dare I say, *scrotumtightening*.

Even though I went with the @ sign, the spirit of this Institute is clearly hyphenated. As if Rick Cohn’s defection from the Second City wasn’t enough, this year’s collaboration creates the heady specter of what Taylor Greer called a new Mannes-Yalensis axis of music theory. There’s also something appropriately chromatic about the hyphen. It basically passes between two discretely diatonic words and blurs them together in a more parsimonious and melismatic way. The hyphen is an intervocalic gap filler, a punctuational passing tone connecting things that are normatively kept apart.

What I’m most amazed at though is the extent to which the hyphen has saturated our human foreground as well. As it turns out, we’ve got a lot of bifurcated people here sporting double-barrel names of their own, like Anson-Cartwright, Bribitzer-Stull, and Schuster-Craig. There’s also the unhyphenated but invariably linked Carson Berry and, most curiously, the unspaced conjunction with intriguing internal capitalization of BaileyShea.

This hyper-hyphenation (which itself is hyphenated) made me think about the other people here, and I discovered some fairly remarkable things. First of all, there are a lot of names that describe concrete, tangible objects. We’ve got some Rings, a Callender, some Sherry, and a Forte. We’re also fortunate to have a number of professions on hand. There’s a Cook, a Kopp, a Taylor, and even a Proctor. For those who like to fish, we have a Hook—and a Bass. Then there’s a whole group of names I have trouble pronouncing correctly, like Tymoczko, Gjerdingen, Hoeckner, and Taavola. There’s people whose names sound like the Jewish law firm I toiled at in Manhattan before I discovered the promised land of music theory: Friedmann, Kramer, Rifkin, and Stein. Not to be outdone, we have their white-shoe counterpart: Harrison, Christensen, and McCreless.

We have two names than make all this very confusing, both Wayne. Then there’s someone with the same name as a guy who’s managed to come to every single Institute except this one without ever applying: Joel. The name of one person who couldn’t make it this year describes what I suspect some of you wish I’d do with these self-indulgent orations: Burnham. That’s why he’s not here. The good news is I only have two talks this year rather than four. The bad news is they’re longer, and not as funny.

We have two Smiths on hand, distinguished by their lone vowel in order to keep up with our Jones. Then there’s a mysterious red planet affiliation, with the Marvin, Martin, Martins constellation. We have a Walter, and a just plain Walt. I’m sorry we don’t have Mr. Rogers, but we do have Miss Rogers. We have names that sound like old cars, like a DeVoto, and the past tense of the word “strike”—Strunk. We also have a crisp first name with only four letters yet two syllables, Alex, which is symmetrically offset by a four-letter two-syllable last name, Puri. One name is only a suffix, Ian. For the kids, we’ve got some wacky cartoon characters with funny rhyming names: Jeff n’ Neff. Finally, I’m analytically pleased to announce for the first time in the history of the Institute, the last syllable of a first name rhymes with the first syllable of the
last name, forming an etymological Retrograde Inversion Chain. Can you guess? Kevin Swinden.

Well, enough name game. You didn’t come all this way to do this. So let me just come right out and say it: music theory is still under the spell of Tristan, or maybe Parsifal. We’ve come to New Haven in search of some Holy Grail to explain irregular chord progressions and nondiatonic relationships. Chromaticism is a crusade, and we are its knights. The Institute is a musical pilgrimage. And what better a Holy Land than Mother Yale? Now anybody who even owns Grout knows that chromaticism is just about as old as Jerusalem. We may think about it differently from time to time, but it’s really nothing new.

Chromaticism in fact is as venerable as diatonicism, or just about so. It’s not only always been a melodic option at least, but at the beginning, it wasn’t even the most radical one. It would be presumptuous in this cerebral air to opine at length about the Greek genera, but I’d like to muse about them just a little, especially the chromatic, and hopefully sprinkle a few factoids along the way. Caveat eruditus: please excuse whatever unscholarly oversights, distortions, and exaggerations I no doubt am about to make. I will accept corrections and criticisms by email.

Greek Chromaticism

Why conjure up those old Greeks again? “Athens, the eye of Greece, mother of arts,” exclaimed Milton! And Virginia Wolff, who I trust in almost everything except my emotional stability, says we look to Athens because “the stable, the permanent, the original human being is to be found there. It is to the Greeks we turn,” she recommended before drowning herself, “when we are sick of the vagueness and the confusion of our own age.” Evidently it didn’t help Ginny too much in the long run, but proceed we shall nonetheless.

The Greeks of course considered the perfect fourth rather than the octave a conceptual module, a fixed frame inside of which they placed two movable notes to form different tetrachords. I’m not exactly sure why they bothered with this, but Andy Mead, who seems smarter than me, once said it’s because the fourth is so natural and easy to sing. The octave then, which seems to me even more natural, was just a conjunction or “fitting together” of two tetrachords. Nichomachus suggests a more pragmatic explanation, citing Philolaus, a contemporary of Socrates and the earliest Pythagorean, who points to a musician playing a lyre. A pluck of the strings was known as a grab, and the first grab was a fourth. So the origin of the tetrachord might have something to do with the mere shape of the hand.

After they figured out the fourth and fit two of them together to make an octave, they called the gap between them a tone, which is also the difference between a fourth and its inversion of the fifth. Starting from one end of the tetrachord, it became clear that if you stacked three tones in a row, you exceeded the frame of a fourth. What actually fit was two wholes and a half. The Greeks called this halftone a leimma—hope I’m pronouncing it right for you sticklers—meaning the remainder after inserting two whole tones into the fourth. It was the residue, whatever was left over, a sort of freak of musical nature or teras in Greek, inexpressible by rational means, with that bizarre ratio of 256:243 computed by Plato in the Timaeus. Ptolemy says it’s perfectly reasonable that there are two 1/2 tones here, because that’s also the basic structure of the body, that is, the lower portion is one unit, the upper torso another, and the head a half. Same thing with the arm: upper arm one, lower arm two, hand a half.

So if bisecting the tone made a semitone, then dicing the semitone made a quartetone, or what the Greeks call a diesis. They decided, correctly I think, that this was the smallest interval
the average Joe could realistically sing or hear. Ptolemy notes that the human capacity both to
generate and perceive an interval converges here at the same limit. He even draws a link between
the word *diesis*, the quartetone, and *dialysis*, meaning “vanishing point” or cessation, in the
sense that this was the vanishing point of sound itself. There’s also a connection between the
word “tone” or *tonos*, and *diateinein*, which means to stretch, as well as *tasis*, meaning tension.
The whole tone stretches the space between two notes creating a tension, whereas the quartetone
contracts it. Aristides says the voice itself is actually stretched by the diatonic genus.

The word “chromatic,” of course, comes from *chroma*, meaning color, or *chroa*, meaning
surface or plane, which I’ll get to in a minute. Some say the chromatic genus was a coloration or
inflection of the diatonic, which is the sense we traditionally use the word today, i.e., with a
diatonic bias. But Aristides says that which lies between black and white is color, so the genus
lying between the enharmonic and diatonic is called color or chromatic. In other words, and
here’s my point, the chromatic is not really opposed, let alone subordinate to the diatonic in the
binary relationship we tend to think of today, but is rather a judicious midpoint, a median
between the twin poles of the diatonic and the enharmonic, the last of which fell by the wayside,
and we’ve pretty much forgotten about ever since.

Autobiographical footnote: I personally have trouble interpreting the word chromatic as
color, I think because I grew up in Detroit in the fifties. Detroit is Motor City, and if the word
*chrome* doesn’t mean much to you, it meant a whole lot to me. Detroit in the fifties was all about
chrome, shiny metal bumpers and trim. Motown was Chrometown—Chrome City, or maybe
Chromatic City. The undisputed Queen of Chrome was the 1953 Buick Roadmaster. She had the
biggest and most impressive chromatic grille you ever saw, like twelve fangs under the lips of
Angelina Jolie. Chromatic to me means steely silver. It reflects color, but has none of its own. In
fact, chrome was the only part of the car that didn’t have color. Bumpers were big mirrors. We
stared into those chromatic grilles and giggled at our distorted faces, and then went inside to
watch *Leave It To Beaver*.

Aristides and Aristoxenus offer different explanations why the enharmonic disappeared.
One says people had trouble singing successive quartetones, the other says no one felt that the
large upper *ditone*, equivalent to our major threerd, was melodic. I think they’re both right:
quartetones are too small, and a major third is too big. As you know, the lower dense cluster of
notes in the chromatic and enharmonic tetrachords was called the *pyknon*—which Barsky, the
Russian, makes a big fuss about—while the upper, airy portion was the *apyknon*. Small intervals
are dense or *pykna*, larger ones are diffuse or *araia*. Even though the chromatic had only two
consecutive semitones, the Greeks conceived of it as consisting entirely of halfsteps. The highest
interval contained three semitones, so in theory there were five altogether. The uniformity of the
chromatic series thus reveals a perfection in its internal regularity, and more specifically in its
triplication of the semitone in the *apyknon* of the tetrachord.

This notion that the number three represents perfection predates the Christian era. The
Greeks didn’t mean in a trinitarian sense, but rather that three is the first number to display a
beginning, middle, and end, expressing the resolution of a dialectic opposition. Ptolemy says the
chromatic genus is the most agreeable to the ear because it represents the perfect mean between
the enharmonic and the diatonic. The Greeks drew numerous analogies between these three
genera and other trichotomies. Aristides, for example, says the diatonic represents our body, the
enharmonic our soul, and the chromatic whatever lies between. In the universe, the diatonic
signifies inert matter, the enharmonic the first cause, and the chromatic the life force passing
from one to the other. In terms of geometry, he says diatonicism, whose whole tone is thick and
substantial, is like a solid; the enharmonic, whose quartetone has a barely discernable magnitude or thickness, represents the line. Chromaticism, whose semitone is intermediate between the two, is organized as a plane. He supports this argument etymologically, since the word for a plane or surface is chroa, which literally means color. A plane or surface, like the shiny chrome on the ‘53 Buick, displays the color of whatever is reflected.

The metaphor I like best though is Ptolemy’s, which is more imaginative, albeit based on a familiar Aristotelian scheme. We know from Boethius that Aristotle says everything, including music, has two aspects: the theoretical and the practical. And each of these two divisions has three genera. The theoretical is divided into the natural, the mathematical, and the spiritual. The practical is divided into the ethical, the domestic, and the political. These categories lie on a continuum, differing only in terms of magnitude or degree. Ptolemy applies Aristotle’s taxonomy to music. On the theoretical side, the enharmonic represents the natural, while the diatonic represents the spiritual. Chromaticism represents the mathematical, halfway between the two and partaking of both. In the realm of practice, the enharmonic represents the ethical, which is private and individual, whereas the diatonic represents the political, which is public and social. The enharmonic is soft and relaxed, and partakes of the inner aura of virtue. The diatonic is heavy and rigid, expressing the outer order of politics.

For Ptolemy, the practical significance of chromaticism is its reconciliation of extremes. Just as mathematics mediates between nature and spirit in the domain of theory, on a pragmatic level, the domesticity of family life, or what Aristotle calls the “art of household management,” forms a chromatic bridge or musical hyphen between the public and the private. Diatonicism represents the objectivity of society, while enharmonicism represents the subjectivity of self. One invokes the constraint of normative order and tonal law, the other the melisma of contemplation and personal introspection.

The family is the chromatic equivalent between diatonic society and the enharmonic individual. Just as chromaticism mediates between enharmonic freedom and diatonic order in music, our family, says Ptolemy, mediates between our private and public life. We cluster together in the chromatic pyknon of the home, not so close to each other as to merge identities and become indistinct like enharmonic quartertones, but not so far apart like autonomous citizens separated by whole tones in the diatony of public life. We nestle together, a family of semitones, in that remarkably ratio of 256:243.

The twelve tones of the chromatic gamut are members of a musical family—equal, close, complexly interacting, but always individually distinct. Together they comprise a tonal household, akin to what Epimenides, the holy man of Crete in the seventh century before Christ, called “soulmates of the manger.” We are gathered here today on a pilgrimage to Yale to study the family life of these chromatic siblings, these twelve disciples, as soulmates of a musical manger. Yet at times, we’ll find them behaving less with domestic harmony, and more like the family Samuel Johnson describes akin to “a little kingdom, torn with factions and exposed to revolutions.” But as far as real families go, I prefer the more mundane description attributed to Charondas of Catana, the legendary lawgiver of Rhegium, who called those packed most closely around us, who we’ve temporarily left at home, our “companions of the cupboard.” And over the next four days, as the hyphens between us begin to contract and we ourselves become more chromatic, we will surely become that too.

**Concert Speech**
Welcome to our featured musical program. Our performer is an Israeli pianist, Dror Baitel. He was born in Tel-Aviv in 1986, and studied with several outstanding teachers in Israel. He is currently a student of Vladimir Feltsman and Yuri Kim at the Mannes College in New York, where he won the prestigious Goldsmith Award. His music has been broadcast over Israeli radio, and he has performed at Alice Tully Hall and the United Nations. By sheer luck, I happened to hear Dror practicing some Bach one day at Mannes and was thoroughly captivated. He has an abundance of both talent and taste. We’re honored that he’s polished up some difficult chromatic pieces, learned a new one at our request, and enthusiastically trained up to New Haven to play a private recital for our distinguished gathering. Please join me in welcoming this wonderful musician to Yale and the Mannes Institute, Dror Baitel.

**Essay Award**

This year the Institute’s inaugurating a new Musical Essay Award. Each year we plan to give a prize for an essay on the overall topic of the Institute. The winner receives a bundle of cash, and presents the essay as a talk. We plan to eventually publish a journal called *The Musical Essayist*. Anyone, including graduate students, is eligible to apply. This year we received six submissions, five from established scholars, and one from a student. What we didn’t anticipate was that it would come from an undergraduate. All the submissions were excellent, but one more closely met our distinctive criteria. According to the guidelines, “the style is creative nonfiction with an emphasis on imagination, charm, sophistication, and the belletristic quality of the prose itself. This award is not for a scholarly article or a paper at a conference. The writing may be humorous, philosophical, critical, or personal, and should engage others in a compelling, entertaining, and thoughtful manner.” So what are we looking for?

Johnson’s Dictionary defines *essay* as “a loose sally of the mind; an irregular indigested piece; not a regularly and ordered composition.” William Gass paints a clearer picture of what essaying is all about. The hero of the essay, he says—and I’m quoting liberally—is the author in the act of thinking things out. Halfway between sermon and story, the essay interests itself in the narrative of ideas in their unfolding. It browses, thumbs through things, proposing possibilities, reciting opinions, passing from one thought to another like food at a picnic. The essay—I’m still quoting Gass—is the opposite of that awful object, the article. The article pretends everything is clear, its argument unassailable, without soggy patches, illicit inferences, or illegitimate connections. It comes with scholarly guarantees and a seal of approval. Given in a dull dry voice at a conference, it still sounds like writing, born for immediate burial in a journal.

Now I don’t want to belabor this or steal time from our winner, let alone our special guest, but since you’re all very good writers who I’m encouraging to apply, I’d like to quote one of the greatest essayists to describe what this is all about. The essay is “suggestive rather than comprehensive. Hints, glimpses, and germs are the utmost it pretends to, and leaves it others to run them down. It’s not written as if always under oath, but must be understood with some abatement. It imparts its discoveries as they arise, without waiting for their full development. The essay, in short, walks about, not to and from.” An article, on the other hand, “never hints or suggests anything, but unladens its cargo in perfect order. The author never stoops to catch a glittering something in your presence, and share it before he quite knows whether it be true or not. Surmises, misgivings, and embryo conceptions have no place in its vocabulary. You can’t hover on the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probably argument. The twilight of dubiety never falls upon it. It’s orthodox—it has no doubts.”
The writer is Charles Lamb, perhaps the greatest essayist since Montaigne. But enough said—I hope you get the picture and will pick up your pens. The 2006 Mannes Institute Essay Award goes to Jeffrey Levenberg, a graduating senior at the New England Conservatory of Music, for his essay *Sophistry Used Against Transcendental Chromaticism in the Ears of the Discourteous*. Jeff has come all the way from Florida to present his talk. He’s obviously an enterprising and clever guy, and his essay deserves ample recognition for capturing the unique literary and intellectual ideals this award represents. I’ve given him some money, and when he’s done, I’ll hand him a certificate. I think it’s remarkable and quite special that a bright student is the first to win this distinctive award. Please join me in a round of applause for Jeff Levenberg.

*Shakespeare and Cervantes*

The beauty of this Institute for me, unlike other aspects of my life, is that I’m allowed to make decisions. They may not be right, but at least I’m empowered to make them. Everything else in my world, and I suspect yours, is run by that bureaucratic hydra, the committee. This past year I had a harrowing experience with one of these creatures, and came away agreeing with a seventeenth-century assessment by a Frenchman whose name I can’t remember. When a committee is made up of five people, he said, one of them is reading, one is delivering their opinion, two are gossiping with each other, and one is asleep.

But I really didn’t accomplish all this alone. There’s been a committee all along. Pat, Dan, and I worked together on virtually every aspect of this event. I’m indebted to them, especially Pat, for helping me bring the Institute to Yale. Beyond that, our entire faculty, including Richard, David, Charles, and Deborah, worked closely as a committee for more than a year putting all the pieces together. Even beyond that though, I see the Institute itself as sort of a big committee, and all of you as its members. The word “committee” comes of course from the Latin *committere*, meaning “to commit.” A “comit-ee” is a person to whom something is committed, or to whom a commitment is made, and a “comit-or” is a person who makes a commitment.

At the Institute we’re all committed and responsible to each other for the task at hand. We can’t fulfill this alone, but only together as a group. There’s an essential element of dialogue in what we do, and in what we seek. I recently learned that this difference between monologue and dialogue is what distinguishes Shakespeare and Cervantes as rival teachers of how we learn and grow. Hamlet and Lear discover truth by talking to themselves, whereas Quixote and Sancho Panza discover truth by talking with each other. For the Englishman, we come to know things alone, through personal introspection. For the Spaniard, we come to know things together, through interpersonal discourse. One’s protagonists are great soliloquists, the other’s are great conversationalists. Friendship in Shakespeare is ironic at best, commonly treacherous. The bond between Quixote and Sancho, the prototype in modern literature, is the foundation for all else.

In this sense, we are more like Cervantes' knight with squire than Shakespeare's solitary prince or king. Here, for four days, we are men and women of La Mancha, in search of windmills, dependent upon one another. We are a compound lot, interlocking comit-ees and comit-ors, hyphenated at the hip, quixotically seeking to find, in John Donne’s words, “what wind serves to advance an honest mind.” And if we can catch that gentle breeze, even for a moment, though others may think us mad, then we too may fulfill some impossible dream.
Jefferson, Burney, and Gesualdo

When I graduated from Yale Law School back in June of 1976, I never imagined I’d be addressing a room of music theorists down the block thirty years later. I was rubbing shoulders at the time with Hillary and Bill Clinton, as well as future Supreme Court Justices Clarence Thomas, Sam Alito, and Secretary of Labor Robert Reich—but I sure didn’t know it. I spent most of my time playing piano in the law school cafeteria, auditing Bob Morris’s theory class, hanging around Wendy Wasserstein, and arguing till dawn about the Mideast with my best friend, a Sudanese Arab named Salman Salman who now runs the World Bank. That’s Yale.

For those of you who’ve woefully neglected the history of America’s greatest educational institution this side of the Charles—the Avis of American academies—Yale was founded over three centuries ago back in 1701. In 1854, halfway between the birth of Yale and today, Joseph Battell donated $5,000 to Old Blue “for the support of a teacher of the science of music to such students as may avail themselves the opportunity.” Yale formally established its Department of Music in 1889—shortly before Allen Forte and Bob Morgan arrived. Its first music degrees were awarded a few years later to four students whose names I neither know nor will mention.

Interestingly enough, in 1776, two hundred years before I graduated from Yale, and at the precise midpoint between its founding and Battell’s introduction of music, Thomas Jefferson, who had absolutely nothing to do with any of these earthshaking events was chosen by his peers to compose the Declaration of Independence. Why Jefferson? Because he was unanimously considered to be the best writer. No one could express these ideas better. Music, however, was what Tom called his “favorite passion.” He practiced the violin every day, and studied the scores of Corelli and Scarlatti.

In his original draft of the Declaration, Jefferson wrote, “we hold these truths to be sacred, that all men are created equal.” This, he said, “was intended to be an expression of the American mind.” Before submitting it to the congressional convention, he shared his work with a single man: Benjamin Franklin. Jefferson was known as the best writer, but Franklin was known to be the smartest. The elder statesman made few revisions. One thing he did change, however, was crucial: the Philadelphian crossed out the word sacred and substituted self-evident. And thus was born that famous watchword of democracy, “we hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.” With a single stroke of the pen, Franklin shifted the source of authority from God to man, from transcendence to immanence, from an appeal to faith to an appeal to reason. If Richard Kramer talks about the chromatic moment in Enlightenment thought, this was the moment of Enlightenment in American thought.

That same year back in England, as we were about to embark upon a struggle for freedom, Charles Burney published what would become the most important account of eighteenth-century musical life, A General History of Music from the Earliest Ages to the Present Period. Burney was a celebrated figure: historian, scientist, composer, teacher, organist, and man of letters. He was also an impeccable researcher, gathering information over a period of years by traveling throughout the continent. He even wrote a book on comets.

Burney was one of the most brilliant musical scholars of his time. According to The New Grove, his book “embodies a combination of technical knowledge, historical inquiry, literary skill, and personal observation which probably no other musician of his age could offer and few since have rivaled.” Samuel Johnson said of his close friend Burney, “I much question if there is in the world such another man for mind, intelligence, and manner.” Burney lamented that the first volume of Hawkins’ competing book hit the stands shortly before his, but in the end it really
didn’t much matter. He died in 1814, the day after Napoleon’s abdication.

Folks like us don’t pay much attention to old Burney these days. He belongs more to the history of musicology than of music theory. So why am I talking about him now? Well, I want to point out Burney’s credentials to underscore his views on chromaticism, which are not only fascinating, but probably hogwash to most of you. In particular, I want to focus on his assessment of a composer who I thought might play a bigger role at this Institute than he actually did—which was nothing at all. The composer I’m talking about, of course, is the man Stravinsky called the “crank of chromaticism,” the notorious Count of Conza, Prince of Venosa, otherwise known as Don Carlo Gesualdo. Gesualdo was the O.J. Simpson of his day. One night he came home from the office to find his wife Maria, wayward daughter of the Marquis di Pescara, in flagrant delicto de fragrante peccato with one Fabrizio Carafa, Duke of Andria. I gather Don Carlo didn’t wear tight gloves and festoon them with a machete like our Heisman Trophy winner, but he just ordered them butchered.

All in all, Maria’s indiscretion and Don Carlo’s machismo played an important role in music history, and what I prefer to think of as the prehistory of this chromatic congress. There must have been some sixteenth-century Giovanni Cochrane, because don Carlo evidently got away scot-free. As a result of the public outrage, however, Gesualdo retired to a country estate and withdrew from society just like O.J. Before that, he composed on the side under a pseudonym, Giuseppe Pilonij. After the trial, which was not televised, and quite unlike O.J., Gesualdo concentrated on music rather than golf and cultivated the chromaticism for which he is forever infamous.

Professor Burney goes to great lengths to condemn Gesualdo as a dilettante. Of course, its meaning as someone who pursues something superficially has little to do with the original sense of the word. Dilettante comes from “delight,” a person who delights in an art, a connoisseur who possesses discrimination and taste, especially in aesthetic matters. From this perspective, that is precisely what both Gesualdo and Burney were—highly cultivated men with a refined musical sensibility. But for Sir Charles, a dilettante was one guilty of “deciding in a summary way, with prejudice in favor of his own little knowledge.” So that’s what he thought of Gesualdo. Determined to trace the origin of his curious chromatic art, Burney pursued a remark in Tassoni’s Pensieri diversi claiming the composer imitated the strange and plaintive style of Caledonian airs invented by James the 1st, King of Scotland. But after analyzing the two, Burney decided that Gesualdo’s madrigals not only had nothing to do with Caledonian melodies, but in fact “contain no melodies at all.” The only connection between the King of Scotland and the Prince of Verosa was simply that they were both dilettantes who composed equally worthless drivel. Burney even trashes Tassoni for making such a ridiculous comparison in the first place.

Although he admits “much has been attempted by this Prince, when performed there is more confusion than in any other composer. His modulation [translate progression], seems forced, affected, and disgusting. The Prince of Verosa,” barks Burney, “was perpetually straining at new expression and modulation, but seldom succeeded. Most of the sounds are accompanied with common chords, but such extraneous modulation is neither learned nor pleasing.” Burney cites Gesualdo’s Moro lasso—Alas, I die—as “a specimen of his harsh, crude, and licentious modulation.” He points to a chromatic progression C# major, A minor 6/3, B major, and G major 6/3 over a descending bass line C#, C, B, and concludes it’s “not only repugnant to every rule, but shocking and disgusting to the ear to go from one chord to another in which there is no relation, real or imaginary, composed of sounds wholly extraneous and foreign to any key. New modulation,” he says, “when guided by science and a nice ear is always welcome, but when it
consists of such licentious and offensive deviations from rule”—and here’s the part I really like—“as constantly rejected by great professors, it can only be applauded by ignorance, depravity, and affectation.”

So now, what are we latter-day chromaticists to make of all this rant from one of the brightest bulbs of the Enlightenment? Burney’s denouncement of Gesualdo is perhaps our best evidence of an eighteenth-century assessment of chromaticism as an artless aberration. This was an age of immanent rationality, with a rage for clarity and transparent order, the age of Johnson’s definitions and Franklin’s bifocals. It gave birth to things like the price tag, standardized weights and measures, public signposts, and the accounting ledger. Coupled with Gesualdo’s heinous crime and hermetic withdrawal, his entangled madrigals were simply the demented creation of a demented mind. Chromaticism was musical murder, the corpus delicti of some compositional crime.

And yet, from Wagner to today, the history of music, not to mention our own presence here, would suggest otherwise. Gesualdo was in fact a visionary, the harbinger of a new musical practice, a one-man avant garde. In hindsight it looks like Burney, not Gesualdo, who’s the hapless dilettante, condemned in his own words, by “deciding in a summary way, with prejudice in favor of his own little knowledge.” Gesualdo’s chromatic cunning seems even more harmless now that our Institute has dutifully mapped out the remote regions of musical space. We’ve conquered chromaticism; its tonal frontier has been tamed and colonized. Chords have been tagged and neatly labeled; all conceivable pathways between them meticulously paved on a logical terrain. It’s all figured out and neatly sanitized: what used to be aberrant, uncanny, or even dangerous is now perfectly safe and tidy after all. Isn’t that what our Institute, indeed our profession, is all about?

But permit me toward the end of our pilgrimage to indulge a private confession. Like the curmudgeon Sir Charles, to my ears Gesualdo’s music, however intriguing, still sounds as Burney put it, a bit “forced and affected.” And in one sense—and here’s my darkest heresy—so too do many of his nineteenth-century henchmen, folks like Scriabin, Liszt, Reger, and the like. Despite its luxuriant multiplicity and the abstract elegance of the tonnetz, I sometimes get this queasy feeling of chromatic capriciousness, a sort of tonal vertigo, aimlessly meandering from syntax to salience on a slippery slope to anything goes. I also find my analytic ambitions chronically frustrated. And I’m sorry, but I don’t think I’m alone. I detect a twinge of regret in Brian Hyer’s lament that chromatic music “wanders between functionless harmonies that neutralize rather than progress to one another, sonorities that seem to float in the music, without a goal, without direction.” Now that doesn’t criminalize chromaticism, but if you’ve read Joe Straus’ recent diagnosis of musical disability, I sometimes wonder if some of these patients don’t suffer from acute chromatitus.

Now please don’t get me wrong. I appreciate succulent richness just as much as the next guy. I admire those toruses, towers, and mobius strips deciphering how I got from A to B, and the talmudic rationale of elaborate geometries. The message is delivered about hexatonic cycles, harmonic color, and hypermodulation. I feel the anguish of German poets, and wear full battle gear to join Deborah’s cry to “embrace the ambiguities.” And let there be no doubt: I take a backseat to no one in relishing distortion, even violation of conventionality—in music and just about everything else. I’m iconoclastic enough.

But secretly, what I sometimes miss in these musical spider webs is a greater sense of their simple intelligibility, their audible logic, what Carl Schachter calls great music’s “inner necessity.” I can stand up and take my dissonance like a man along with Charles Ives, but not if
I’m knee deep in harmonic quicksand. Art like politics, I think, teaches that our most cherished fantasies and creative freedoms are paradoxically grounded, tugging against some lawful framework of normative constraint. That’s what distinguishes them from indulgence and anarchy, from what Schenker decried as the mere “freedom of wild horses.” At least that was the eighteenth century’s view of things, that sense of delicate equilibrium between order and freedom, between creativity and constraint pervading Schiller’s aesthetic education and C.P.E. Bach’s musical handbook, which after the chromatic turbulence of the nineteenth century, Schenker sought nostalgically to restore, and Schoenberg quixotically to reinvent.

And if I may return to my original theme, this I think is the same sense of fragile equilibrium in the Declaration of Independence as a product of the Age of Reason. This motivates the logical necessity upon which Franklin predicated human rights, when he revised Jefferson’s initial draft to declare its fundamental freedoms not to be merely intuitive or mystically sacred, and therefore irrational, or rather arational, but immanently real, grounded and consciously self-evident, that is, evident in and of themselves.

Burney no doubt also found this same intrinsic intelligibility lacking in Gesualdo’s music as well. For him, like Benjamin, an appeal to anything beyond was simply too tenuous and uncertain to entertain. And as a man of the Enlightenment, he had no other basis for its appreciation. I, on the other hand, as a postmodern man, drifting past the narrative of reason itself, am not so deterred. While I miss their coherence and question their freedom, I also confess to feeling in these curious chromatic juxtapositions an alluring and irrational mystique. And this, I’d like to think, is some godless echo of what Jefferson may have felt, sitting beneath the sycamores at Monticello, when he grounded human rights, and ultimately truth itself, in an invocation of the divine, as something beyond the rationality of his own mind. Yet whether he believed it or merely deferred to his mentor, Jefferson accepted Franklin’s replacement of the sacred by the self-evident, creating the manifesto, indeed the very sentence par excellent of rational democracy that governs today. We indeed hold these truths, our most sacred freedoms, to be immanently self-evident, perfectly reasonable, and unequivocally applicable to all.

Jefferson returned, however, to his original impulse in his later life. Shortly before his death in 1826, a year before Beethoven’s, as the Age of Reason captured in the stroke of Benjamin’s pen receded, Jefferson confessed to a new reawakening. “As I near the end of my voyage,” wrote the widowed father of three daughters, “I’ve learned to be less confident in the conclusions of human reason, and give more credit to the honesty of contrary opinions.” This in fact could also be the watchword for our own proceedings, along with Diderot’s admonition that the unquestioned remains unproven, valuing the dialectic of discourse over the certainty of our own convictions. Knowledge itself, says Gadamer, means considering opposites, not alone in our sanctuaries, but in dialogue with others in a forum such as this.

By the way, we don’t often hear Jefferson and Beethoven mentioned in the same breath, but both are transitional figures between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, straddling the Ages of Reason and Romance. An ocean apart, their genius spans two worlds, the rational and the intuitive, and transcends them both. Jefferson’s Declaration and Beethoven’s Fifth are among the great testaments of the human spirit because of this very dialectic. They share Schachter’s inner necessity, infused with a simultaneous sense of the sacred and the self-evident. They make the transcendent immanent, and come as close as we can to political and musical scripture. The definitive line of one is like the opening theme of the other, a compact and powerful idea upon which a great edifice is constructed. If America originated in a motive, then Jefferson is its composer.
Shortly after the turn of the century, as Beethoven finished his Second Symphony, Jefferson took stock of his own accomplishments. First, he says, he removed obstructions on the Rivanna River near his home in Virginia where he liked to canoe. Next, he simply mentions the Declaration of Independence. After that, he says, he brought olives from Marseilles to Georgia and African rice to the Carolinas. “The greatest service which can be rendered any country,” he explains, “is to add a useful plant to its culture, especially a bread grain.” “I’ve sometimes asked myself whether the world is a better place for my having lived at all,” Jefferson reflected. And in words that still astonish me, he concluded, “I don’t know that it is. I’ve been the instrument of doing many things. But they would have been done by others—and some of them perhaps a little better.”


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON SCHOENBERG AND HIS LEGACY

June 24-27, 2007
Mannes College of Music
New York City

What is the Institute?

Welcome friends and colleagues to the seventh annual Mannes Institute. Those of you gathered here today come from ten different countries and eighteen American states. You all have in your conference packets a list of who you are, a schedule of events, a handy map, and of course, your very own autographed Arnold Schoenberg pencil straight from Vienna. The Institute began back in 2001, and has grown beyond anyone’s expectations, including my own. We’re now planned through 2011, and there are efforts underway to bring the Institute to Europe.

Kicking off this special event each June is a momentous occasion for me. If I may quote Shakespeare, it’s the one time of year I’m dressed in a little, brief authority. For the rest of the time, I have, as Thoreau said of himself, “a real genius for staying at home.” Over the next four days however, you’ll come to know, as Schoenberg just said, who I am. You will also get to know my vision of who we are, or who at least I think we can be as a community of scholars. I
hope to bring you all on a journey to a place I suspect you’ve rarely been before, that I’d like to create together.

The Institute has been around now for seven years. Some people, in addition to my wife, tell me it’s special, but I don’t think anyone’s quite put their finger on why. And since most of you are first-timers here, please let me take a stab before our proceedings actually begin. Of course, I’m a little biased, but most of us gave up on objectivity long ago. So, OK, Mr. Director, you say to yourself, I’ve come all this way, studied all this material, and read all your finicky emails. So what’s this thing all about? What is the Mannes Institute?

Let’s start with some official policies on our website: 1. The mission of the Institute is to promote collegiality, stimulate discourse, foster inquiry, and disseminate knowledge among professional scholars of achievement and distinction—that’s you—within the academic music community. Sounds pretty good. 2. All participants are expected to do the required reading and advance preparation for the workshops—that’s the work part—to actively contribute to the Institute’s proceedings, and to engage in a spirit of cooperation and collegiality in accordance with its mission and participatory methodology. A little harder, but still good. 3. The faculty’s function—that’s them—is not exclusively to lecture but to guide communal working sessions and facilitate interactive dialogue. We’ll see how they do.

Now some of you may have noticed that the Institute has a watchword on our website which says, “Deliberate with Coolness, Analyze with Criticism, Reflect with Candor, and Evaluate with Conviction.” I plagiarized most of this phrase from an article published back in 1787 under the pseudonym Cato during the public debate over the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. For some reason, this rare book is in the Mannes Library, next to Colin Sterne’s magisterial treatise, Arnold Schoenberg: The Composer as Numerologist.

Many historians think Cato was secretly New York’s Governor George Clinton—no relationship to Bill or Hillary—but there’s no conclusive evidence of authorship. Against almost unanimous support for constitutional ratification, Mr. Cato urged the colonists to think for themselves, by deliberating with coolness, analyzing with criticism, and reflecting with candor. It was my idea to toss in “evaluate with conviction” a couple of centuries later to create the acronym “dare,” which evidently didn’t occur to Cato. But his challenge of independent thought and reasoned skepticism, even in the face of opposition, articulates the credo of the Mannes Institute. The logo on our website, da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, is also a symbol of the spirit of rational inquiry that guides our deliberations.

The original prototype of the inquiring community of course is classical Athens. We can’t issue togas with the registration materials, but I’ll at least quote the governor of Athens, whose words are worth more than mine. “The great impediment to action is not discussion,” says Pericles, “but the want of knowledge gained by discussion.” So discussion and dialogue, that’s basically what we’re after.

The Mannes Institute is an experiment in collaborative learning. It’s a community in constant flux and realignment, with new people coming and going, all of whom think and care deeply about music and hope to share their insights, doubts, and discoveries. This is a place where we analyze ideas among peers who will appreciate, stimulate, and provoke us in a mutually respectful way. You are each invited to examine your own thinking out loud before others in this safe and receptive environment.

The Institute is designed to air our views, not on mute and tidy pages of journals and books, but in the lively give and take of a real-time interactive gathering, where good spirited haggling, trial balloons, half-baked truths, sudden intuitions, and speculative rebuttals fill the air. Our
modality here is one of engagement and even friendly argumentation. We welcome tempered dissent and debate, rather than the uniformity of professional groupthink on one hand, or the pitfalls of cloistered insularity on the other. We affirm a noble tradition of humanistic inquiry premised on the rigorous testing of ideas through collegial interrogation, rooted in venerable disciplines of independent thought, critical examination, and free-ranging discourse. We thrive on what Virginia Woolf calls the stimulus of contradiction.

The Institute presents myriad opportunities for spontaneous conversations and collaborations in the workshops and the social spaces in between. Within our team of 45, there are innumerable subsets and combinations for collegial interaction. I urge you to drop any shyness or inhibition, to relax and take your intellectual shoes off, get to know one another as friends, and above all, reach out to others, particularly those you don’t yet know, in a warm and receptive way. Be available and inclusive. Branch out and make everyone feel at home. There is no hierarchy here, and no one who doesn’t belong, and doesn’t have something valuable to contribute.

Over the next four days, in a posture of monastic retreat in the middle of Manhattan, we can hold up a mirror to ourselves as an international community, a united nations of scholars with a single mission. The people in this room embody the current global state of Schoenberg scholarship as we approach the centennial of Op. 11. This is a momentous event not only in the reception of Arnold Schoenberg, but in the history of our discipline.

The Institute is an entirely different animal than our normal academic conferences. We’re more participatory and less formal, more candid and less staged. We’re cozier, more personal, more challenging, and frankly, more fun. We consider things in depth, with attention to detail. We’re public broadcasting next to network news, an art film next to the Hollywood blockbuster, an intimate coffee house next to the suburban mall. This is a safe haven where we can drop our titles and pretenses, roll up our sleeves, let down our hair, and become students once again.

Our job as scholars is to think, but the actual business of thinking, our intuitions and embryonic conceptions, have no place in our professional conduct. The rich shadows of speculation are never cast in our finished products. We can’t hover on the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. Our traditional scholarly modalities are orthodox—there’s little room for doubt.

The Institute cuts a different path. We create a site for the construction and deconstruction of paradigms, a locus for active self-critique. In our circular workshops, polished arguments and nascent hypotheses confront and cross-fertilize each another. We hope to plant seeds that will bear the fruit of further research. Ours is not a solitary endeavor. It’s too easy, as someone said of Emerson, to be a sage in one’s own study. We gather not just to learn, but also to teach, not just to take but also to give.

The task before us, I warn you, is rigorous. This Institute is not a stroll in the park. You are all welcome here, but there’s a price of admission. Something is asked of you while you’re here. There’s work to be done. The success of this experience depends upon you. And so unless necessary, you’re expected to stay with us in mind and body for each step of the journey, at all events including our workshops, these morning meetings, our daily meals, and our social gatherings.

The relentless pace and intensity of the program, for which in some quarters I’ve earned a masochistic reputation, is deliberately designed to induce fatigue, the sort of dizziness Derrida calls “intellectual vertigo.” By wearing down our resistance and perhaps even certitude in our own habits of thought, we become both exhausted and exhilarated, and experience a kind of
conceptual brainwashing, wiping the slate clean, at least temporarily, as a predicate for private evaluation and reconstruction in the recovery room at home.

So what then is the Mannes Institute? It’s both a physical place and a conceptual space. It’s a nursery of reflections where we think aloud and build camaraderie in a deeper way. It’s a process, a mode of noncompetitive and egalitarian interaction. It’s our Athenian symposium, guided by the spirit of Pericles and Leonardo.

As patient scholars secluded in our studies, chained to our committees, and entrenched in our teaching, what opportunities do these four summer days present? Now, I would say is our time for ourselves; our time to read and think together and learn side by side. Now is our time to drop our ranks and resumes and teach not just our students, but each other as well. This is our time to take stock of our collective knowledge, to compare notes, and assess where we are, and where we might go. Now is our time to ask questions without answers, to celebrate multiple perspectives, and appreciate who we are as people who like to think in an unthinking world.

That for me is what makes this Institute special, why I’m here, and what I at least hope to accomplish. I invite you to our floating think tank, the Mannes Institute, this “discursive democracy” in Habermas’s words, where all of you matter, and each of you has an important role to play.

Morton Feldman once told me you’re lucky if you have one original idea in your whole life. Schoenberg had a big Gedanke, and we’re still talking about it 100 years later. Feldman in his own way had a quieter one too. And this, I suspect, is probably mine. I’m not so egocentric as to call it Wayne’s World, because to make it happen, it must become your world too, at least for these next four days. And that’s now what I’m asking you to do: help me make this happen, and help all of us make it good. You’ve done all this work, and come all this way. I’m asking you now to seize the time, and maximize the incredible potential in this room, by bonding together as a collective enterprise, yoking yourselves more closely to one another in a fraternity of scholars, so we may come to think and grow as one, and emerge revitalized though a genuine meeting of the minds.

Concert Speech

Welcome to our musical extravaganza. For those of you who don’t know, I’m Wayne Alpern, founder and director of the Mannes Institute for Advanced Studies in Music Theory. Each year at the Institute, we try to incorporate some live music into what for the most part are purely intellectual proceedings. Before we begin though, let me acknowledge the guests in our audience and welcome them to our Institute. While our workshops are closed affairs—secret skull and bones sessions for serial disciples—our plenary meetings and particularly our concert are more graciously open to close friends of the family.

The Institute represents an important side of Mannes I’m not sure everyone knows about. And despite my moments in the sunshine this week, once it’s over, I resume a rather inconspicuous rank within its walls. I began our proceedings yesterday with an introduction called “What is the Mannes Institute?” and I won’t repeat that here. But I’d like to take just a few minutes to explain to this slightly wider audience what this is all about and why it’s so special—not only within the music profession, but within Mannes, and within the New School at large.

In this room are forty-five of the leading Schoenberg scholars from ten countries and eighteen states, representing prominent colleges and universities around the world. And ironically they have all come to Mannes—not a prestigious academic institution of higher
learning, but a quaint and intimate conservatory, what our Dean once called “a precious jewel” in the heart of Manhattan. Although we certainly produce some of the finest performers on the planet, Mannes lives outside of the academic mainstream. So why are these prominent scholars here, with about an equal number having been turned away?

Joseph Addison noted in the Spectator back in 1711 that the larger the group, the shallower the conversation. The depth of discourse is inversely proportional to the number of participants. When a multitude gathers, he says, the discussion is formal and general. Only in smaller groups, and ultimately in dialogue, do we descend into particulars and grow freely communicative.

The Mannes Institute implements Addison’s insight among scholars of music. Each year we convene a different group to address a different topic, but we always retain the intimacy and informality necessary for candid interpersonal exchange. Unlike conventional conferences in this or any other field, there are just a few speeches and presentations. For the most part, we engage in participatory discussion and spontaneous dialogue among our peers. We drop our professional titles, affiliations, and even our last names. We sit in circles and ask each other questions and think out loud. Our mottoes are those of Dante, who says “it pleases me as much to doubt as to know,” of John Donne, who urges us to “doubt wisely,” and of Montaigne, who warns that “only the fool is certain.”

From what everyone tells me, there’s no other place quite like this in the world. Although Mannes is well known as an outstanding conservatory, it has not been considered an intellectual center. Over the past seven years, however, largely because of this Institute, Mannes has achieved international recognition as a Mecca for scholars seeking intellectual sustenance and professional camaraderie. As an important part of the New School University, we are also putting into practice that institution’s historic reputation for open-minded discourse at the cutting edge of inquiry. Finally, everyone here should know that the Institute is supported entirely by generous private individuals, who have benefited each of you, this school, and our entire profession by making this imaginative vision a reality.

Now you probably all think Schoenberg is the cat’s meow, or else you wouldn’t be here. But I can at least tell you during my preparation for this Institute, around 16.5 seconds into the recording of his Variations for Orchestra I played in my apartment, everyone in my entire family made it clear they hated him, it—and me. When I told my kids this is what the Institute is about, they’re ninety. When I took out the score of the Piano Concerto from the Mannes library, the girl behind the desk snickered that it hadn’t been checked out in twelve years. She assured me I didn’t have to bring it back till December—2010.

I told my parents this was about serialism—they thought I was planning the breakfast menu. My mom thinks Schoenberg looks just like uncle Bertram, and wondered whether he belongs to their synagogue in Detroit. I told them he was a grumpy old Jewish man—my dad just glared at me. When I said his name was Arnold, he played tennis and supported Israel, they wanted to invite him for brunch. I explained he lived in Los Angeles near O.J. Simpson. They got up and said, “oy vey, another meshugganah.”

Anyway, I feel the hook coming on here, so let’s get on with the show. I hope you’ve all enjoyed some good food and drink, and are ready now for some music and discussion. You should all have a program and see we have two fine performances tonight. In between we’re going to conduct the first dodecaphonic raffle in the history of music. I’ve asked two of my Mannes colleagues, Carl Schachter and Joel Lester, to handle the introductions, because I’ve temporarily run out of things to say. Neither of them of course needs an introduction. As
Schoenberg said, “I think you know you who they are by now.” So without further ado, please welcome my friend and favorite teacher, Carl Schachter.

**Essay Award**

One of the key ingredients of a good essay is wit, or at least as John Locke defines it. Wit for Locke is the opposite of judgment. Judgment consists of the analytic separation or differentiation of things or ideas, drawing distinctions and clarifying ambiguities. It’s pulling things apart, like petals from a flower, breaking them down into constituent parts and components. Judgment is basically what we exercise when we analyze a piece of music.

Wit, on the other hand, is the opposite process of putting things together. It’s the perception of incongruous connections between things that are different. Wit is the novel assembly of ideas, conjoining things not apparently so, finding unsuspected confluences, and drawing unlikely inferences to elicit a sense of surprise and delight. Judgment is analytic, wit is synthetic. The first is an act of differentiation, the second an act of conjunction.

Drawing upon Locke’s distinction in the *Spectator*, Joseph Addison found wit not merely in novel association, but the radical juxtaposition of ideas, putting things together that intrinsically have little or nothing in common at all. When Merce Cunningham was asked how his choreography fit with Cage’s music, he replied, “they go together, because I put them together.”

As an eighteenth century man, Addison wondered whether the qualities of wit were universal. Does that which is intriguing to one person appear so to others, or most others? Moliere, he says, read all his comedies to his housekeeper in order to gauge their success on the stage. The audience always followed the old woman, and laughed in the exact same places. Judgment is not always good, but wit, it seems, is always witty.

The winning submission for this year’s Mannes Institute Essay Award is an exemplar of this kind of wit. It draws an imaginative and unsuspected connection, creatively juxtaposing and interweaving two wildly different ideas that go together because the author, like Cunningham, had the wit and audacity to put them together. The intersection is refreshing, illuminating, and provocative. The essay is elegantly composed, thoroughly entertaining, and ably crafted with a sophistication deserving our praise and admiration. Capturing the distinctive belletristic aesthetics this particular competition invokes—it’s not supposed to be a scholarly recitation, but a contemplative rumination—there’s little wonder its author has received wide recognition for his considerable literary skills.

The winner of the 2007 Mannes Institute Essay Award, unanimously chosen by this year’s selection committee among five highly qualified entries, is James Wierzbicki, for his compelling essay, “Schoenberg as Werewolf.” On behalf of the Institute, I’m honored to present this prestigious award, and turn the floor over to Jim. He’s flown all the way from Ann Arbor this morning just for this exclusive presentation to all of you, so please let’s give him a warm and appreciative round of applause.

**Why Is Schoenberg Great?**

Each year I urge the members of the Institute to raise controversial questions, engage in debate, and kindle disagreement. And each year I fail. The Institute invariably attracts supporters rather than detractors of a particular persuasion. The Schenkerians came to the Schenker Institute, the Lewinians to the Transformation Institute, and the Chromaticists came to the
Chromaticism Institute. They all agreed with each other. And everyone here is a card-carrying Schoenbergian, which I presume is why you came. So if I asked whether Schoenberg is great, instead of why he is, it would to many be blasphemy.

The goal of the Institute for me, however, is not to preach to the choir, but to provoke it. I’d rather question Schoenberg’s legacy than defend it. Socrates once said, “The difficulty is not to praise an Athenian at Athens, but at Sparta.” And the converse holds equally true. We’ve sung Schoenberg’s praise in consonant chords for four days now. Where’s the voice of dissonant dissent?

I’d like to cross-examine Schoenberg today and debate his legacy. I’ve saved this somewhat cowardly to the end, so no one can refute me. Forgive me. But if he’s so great, surely he can sustain it, and you can disregard it. May I at least ask then, what’s Schoenberg’s case for greatness? Surely his reputation alone isn’t sufficient to rob us of our liberty to interrogate him. Montaigne reports that once the ancient Mexicans anointed their king, they no longer dared to look him in the face. But Schoenberg isn’t king and we’re not Mexicans. After all, how can we be sure, by the intensity of our admiration, that we’ve not imputed a stature that may be exaggerated or misplaced?

We’re not comparing Schoenberg to the rest of us, but to the elite society of musical geniuses. We’re beyond the stage where his music was just a promise or noble experiment, to one where it must now be weighed on the scales of greater artistic achievement. The question is not what is Schoenberg next to me or you, but next to Mozart and Bach. Is he ever that passionate, that exalted, or profound? We might ask the question posed by Coleridge: what’s the difference between a great mind and a merely strong one?

If we were to genuinely debate Schoenberg’s stature, and to put our collective premise into issue, what would the case against greatness look like? What would one allege? Here’s a quote from an acclaimed contemporary composer that sounds like nothing we’ve heard over the past four days: “Schoenberg,” he says, “represented something twisted and contorted. He was the first composer to assume the role of high priest, a creative mind whose entire life ran unfailingly against the grain of society, almost as if he had chosen the role of irritant. Despite my respect for and even intimidation by the persona of Schoenberg, I profoundly dislike the sound of twelve-tone music. His aesthetic is to me an over-ripening of nineteenth-century individualism, one in which the composer was a god of sorts, to which the listener would come as if to a sacramental altar. It was with Schoenberg that the ‘agony of modern music’ was born. Audiences were rapidly shrinking, in no small part because of the aural ugliness of his music.” The author is the talented and successful composer John Adams.

Can we ask, as one critic did of Henry James, whether Schoenberg was “merely excessively ingeniousness?” Is his music too self-conscious, extravagant, and pretentious? To what extent was he motivated by vanity and consciousness of himself as a composer? To what degree are his theories about him rather than about music itself? Like Stravinsky, Schoenberg had the immensely valuable gift of charisma, which makes up for, or masks, more than a thousand faults. But are we attracted by his charisma more than his music?

Like the poet Yeats, Schoenberg may have been haunted more by the idea of the great artist rather than the great work of art. Music for him wasn’t just about notes, but a mode of identity and self-proclamation. Its function was not simply music per se, but autobiography, to defend and define himself. Schoenberg wanted to be a great composer, and be remembered as such. His goal was not just to “clear some creative space” in the great garden of music history, as Straus a’Bloom so innocently puts it, to set up a shrine in the path along the way.
In some respects, Schoenberg was never able to get past himself. The force of character was so powerful that even he fell under its spell. The music became a personal statement, a manifesto giving expression to a concept, and that, rather than the music, became the core of the enterprise. He was possessed by what Santayana calls an “intellectual ambition,” not just to hear his work performed, but to make himself revered and historically significant.

Schoenberg’s identity, in short, merged with and even dominated his art. This is a man who wrapped himself up in his own flag at night. There was nothing obscure or hesitant about him. He had a copious and muscular mind hungry for engagement. Possessing a brawny logic, he was possessed by the fiercest attachment to an idea, which in his words, he “defended, fought, and stood for.” There’s a sacerdotal quality to Schoenberg’s music, as though its purpose is to illuminate and instruct, and above all, convert. “This,” you seem to hear him saying, “is the way to do it.” The pieces reflect hermetically back upon the composer himself as a kind of musical ayatollah, speaking in an esoteric tongue whose technical barriers insure that it’s meaningful only to disciples and exegetes like us.

So much of Schoenberg is involved in method. At some point one must ask, does excessive concern with methodology inhibit creative power, or unlock it? When we assess Beethoven and Bach, let alone Shakespeare or Rembrandt, does an emphasis laid almost didactically on technique contribute to or detract from the artistic output? Does method elevate music to a higher plane, or degrade it to fetish and learned conceit? Does art become better when sheltered under the authority of a system? Is what Max Weber identified as the progressive rationalization of music, if not its mathematization, a good thing—or not so much?

We approach Schoenberg as much through his mind as his music, through his notions as much as his notes. The thought endures when the sound is gone, and what we take away is not a theme or melody, but a question about the nature of music itself. The idea of it, to borrow Hazlitt’s observation about Beau Brummell, is everything, or maybe just too much so.

These issues aren’t new in the history of music, but no one before Schoenberg brought them into such relief. There is, as Dahlhaus diagnoses, an element of compulsion in his method. Instead of being in a language, the music seems to be about language. It has its own invented vocabulary that recalls a familiar one, but with its own syntax. It’s a self-constituted lingo of tonal discourse, a sort of “musical Esperanto” to borrow Botstein’s metaphor, “gratuitously ugly,” he says, “but justifiable on technical grounds.” And as Philip Larkin claimed of Auden, the result is sometimes too complex to be memorable, and too intellectual to be moving. As one scholar said, at times there’s something almost priggish about it. For the majority of listeners, it sounds like musical spinach: it tastes awful but we’re told it builds stronger ear muscles. We need to listen dutifully and differently, and that makes a lot of folks squirm.

The music is quintessentially modern, as a self-conscious attempt to rupture conventionality. But as modernism matured—Adorno refers paradoxically to the “Aging of New Music”—the shock of the new wore off. Falling into contradiction with its own idea, it forfeited its claim not only to greatness, but to newness itself. When we hear one atonal piece after another in the same no longer shocking style, generated by increasingly elaborate schemes and mimicking the radicalism of a century ago, what we too often hear is just a language, a syntax, and a style, and a dated one at that, rather than anything that might be considered a fresh and newly inspired individual musical utterance.

Many composers schooled on Schoenberg have come to the conclusion that we’re past the point where any further development along these lines is fruitful. It seems too narrow, too personal, too unique, and too self-conscious to be capable of sustaining other voices, so that
those writing in Schoenberg’s style somehow forfeit their own voices and produce faint echoes of the one who defined it as his own. We detect a return to tonality as an older, but perhaps richer and more viable medium of musical expression. Nearly a century after Op. 11, our goal is not so much to convert disbelievers, but simply retain our ranks. Even fifty years ago, only four years after Schoenberg’s death, Adorno wrote, “Today, artists like Berg and Webern would hardly be able to make it through the winter.”

Schoenberg is modern as well in his consciousness of the past. Yet at times, his historical references seem defensively grafted on, in an attempt to sanitize his rupture with all that has come before. In the end, his work may reject as much, perhaps more than it discovers. The abolition of tonality was an emancipation, but one which also incurred a loss. Lacking appeal to a larger audience, the music risks becoming a snobbish and cultish code for a cabal of specialists at an Institute like this, justified by our own self-serving rhetoric and exculpatory paradigms. Is this a good thing because the music’s so great that the common masses, unlike the case of Mozart, can’t possibly understand it, or is it because it is somehow removed from the lived world of ordinary people, cut off from the lifeblood of music, of what music has always been, and in some sense will always be, in short, from the human experience?

Schoenberg may be safe in our theory departments and well-bound journals, as what Jonathan Dunsby calls “the central architect of present day theory and practice,” but how do we then explain John Adams’ not atypical sense outside the ivory tower, and even among our own students within, that atonality and serialism have become oppressive and stodgy rather than relevant and liberating? Time has not been a friendly witness to Mr. Schoenberg, and the verdict of history has largely run against him. His polemics ring hollow, their promise unfilled. Pieces remain unrecorded and rarely performed.

The piety of serialism now feels conventional and its once radical results somewhat prosaic, musical relics of a bygone era. In the twenty-first century, Schoenberg’s modernist crisis seems excessive and remote. Even his own capitulation to tonality was for some an apostasy. He discovered tools that did their business for their time, but now once more, with one thing after another, the world and its conditions have changed yet again. Schoenberg’s tools can’t be our tools, because his business is not our business, and his time and place are certainly not our own.

But that’s not Schoenberg’s problem, it’s ours. He existed, as do we, in historical context. He was undeniably a man of his age. Yet even within that context, what would compel a composer to make such a radical break with the past and engage in what so many consider to be an idealistic and even arrogant pursuit? What correlation is there between that historical moment and the man himself? Did Schoenberg choose atonality, or did atonality choose him?

“No one wanted to be” the notorious Schoenberg, he teases, but “someone had to be, so I let it be me.” But if he hadn’t done it, would someone else with equal vision, daring, and skill? To what extent is Schoenberg’s art and historical position an expression of his own ego and personal ambition rather than of his ethos and his age? Is atonality the historically determined outcome of larger forces accumulating in nineteenth-century chromaticism, or of a single man’s psychological need to assert and defend himself, to become famous and influential? Is Schoenberg so egotistical and autodidactically unencumbered that he thinks he can alter the nature of music and the course of its history?

The man seemed compelled to stamp his own individuality on just about everything, insisting on being unique, yet always linking himself in some way to the past. There’s an ambivalent desire to be different, but also to belong—to be oneself, but part of something larger. He sought to engage tradition, yet redefine it. Schoenberg was enmeshed in the dialectic Virginia
Woolf describes when she wrote, “It is the past that solidifies the present, yet in order for the present to unfold creatively, the grip of the past cannot be rock solid.”

Peter Burkholder points out how Schoenberg’s self-imposed challenge of giving birth to the new from the womb of the old actually mirrors his pragmatic compositional technique. The reinterpretation of the motive through developing variation encodes a larger reinterpretation of tradition itself, each invoking the past through what Martha Hyde calls “creative memory.” The music is literally constructed out of the same transformative process as the aesthetic that fostered it, extending what comes before to generate yet ground something new.

Perhaps it’s in pursuing this synthesis more intrepidly than anyone else, rather than in any sense Schoenberg himself may have envisioned, that his artistic path approaches greatness. His is the model of the modern artist’s plight: pitting the weight of an overwhelming tradition, the allure of the masterpieces, against the artist’s obligation to define his own voice and create something authentically one’s own. Among his contemporaries, Schoenberg alone could boast a truly original style, owing to the perfect correspondence between his aims, his character, and their musical expression. His internal unanimity was overwhelming and powerful. Serialism reconciles the tension between Schoenberg’s polar impulses of radical deconstruction and cohesive reconstruction by fusing them together into a single principle of musical organization.

Yet the sense in which his music might be said to succeed, by being so original and uniquely constructed, is also the sense in which it perhaps fails, by its inability to achieve universality. It succeeds and fails at the same time, because it is personal, too personal, too individual, and too much a mirror of one man’s own mind. Building on Schorske, Reinhold Brinkmann construes Schoenberg’s impulse to create so autonomously as a subjective turning away from musical convention toward a private inner world of abstract relationships in the face of an external world disintegrating around him. By this often-accepted view, recently challenged by historian Steven Beller, atonality was the psycho-acoustic fallout of social and political changes in the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy. The fracture of the tonal hierarchy mirrored deeper fissures in Viennese society.

The argument has a Marxist flavor, casting music history as an epiphenomenon of material conditions below. The composer is merely an expressive pawn caught in the subterranean collision of greater historical forces. Without implicating ethnic stereotypes, we may further inquire whether Schoenberg’s art was the cerebral, legalistic product of a marginalized Jewish mind, divorced from the mainstream of European musical culture. Alternatively, however, if we place Schoenberg himself behind the wheel, rather than Marx, the Emperor, or God, his failure to drive within proper musical limits was because the fervor of his own genius goaded him across the tonal frontier. And as for excessive abstraction, one can certainly argue, and history bears out the opposite: that as a matter of listening, it’s the music’s concreteness, its physical thing-like objectivity, rather than any perceived intellectual construct, that makes it so radically different.

In any event, at the midnight hour of modernism, in the vortex of disintegration and rebirth, Schoenberg struggles to define and recreate his own musical identity. And to do this, he must pay homage to, yet at the same time, exorcise the ghosts of music past. He wrestles with his demons like Jacob with the angel. Yet, lacking their popular appeal and canonic certification, and obsessed with his destiny, he chisels his own image on the Mt. Rushmore of musical giants. To Schoenberg, his music was just like that of the masters, nothing less. The point, however, is not which explanatory scheme we adopt to explain why it was composed, or even whether we like this music or think it’s great. The point is that it was composed at all, that it exists, the simple fact of its phenomenological reality, that someone dared to write such audacious scores.
that challenge what music had always been, and may well always be, and that he convinced us of its inherent necessity.

Schoenberg’s is the emblematic musical achievement of our time. It is defiant, yet lofty, flawed but perfectly so. Its very shortcomings, as Ruskin might say, prove he was a man of unparalleled courage and conviction. In it, we hear moments of great beauty and of ugliness, moments of wit and of boredom, moments of delicacy and of terror. Schoenberg’s music has this characteristic of greatness: it exists by itself. By the end, everything seems to be there. We enter a world he created, like Einstein or Freud, and marvel how it differs from all others we’ve ever imagined. Like the man himself, it is charming and incomprehensible, exhilarating and exasperating. Its presence is overwhelming and undeniable, and through it, Schoenberg becomes overwhelming and undeniable, whether we like it or not.

Now I won’t stand here at the end of this Institute, perhaps with some of you, arms aloft, and proclaim this music to be great. I don’t know yet that is it. I reserve that accolade for the monuments of our art. But I will be among the first to proclaim that the composer, the artist, this man himself, is unmistakably great, indeed heroic, in a way that I would only reserve for Beethoven, the man.

And even then, as Cowley said of Pindar, Schoenberg may be “a species alone”—in a class by himself. Our Institute, the first devoted to a single person, is charged with the peculiar passion that among 20th-century composers he alone can excite. Of all our musicians there is none quite so controversial or bewildering. As Szymanowski said, Schoenberg crossed the Rubicon, and that alone may be great. If I am questioning him harshly today, even as devil’s advocate, this is characteristically his homage. For Schoenberg himself is music’s Great Questioner. He questions tonality out of love for tones, history out of reverence for the past, and convention out of allegiance to a higher authority. He interrogates music, and above all, he interrogates us. He just won’t leave us alone.

Irascible, relentless, maligned yet unwilling to yield an inch, this was a man who was insistently and unflinchingly himself. Everything he touched has this integrity ingrained in it. Whatever else we can say about him, Schoenberg’s music, to invoke Hazlitt’s term, is full of gusto. Despite its rigor, there’s a feeling that something much greater than technical prowess, pastiche, and polemics is at stake. The result is brimming with character and emotion, and profoundly artistic. It is the robust reflection of a tireless mind, and the purest emanation of a powerful personality. We always sense its honesty and authenticity. This is the real McCoy.

Along with Stravinsky, his alter ego, Schoenberg is the first composer we truly feel to be one of ourselves. Yet we scarcely know whether he is the last of an older race of men, or the first of one that is to come. Like an oracle even before the age itself had fully bloomed, Schoenberg confronted the creative turmoil of his time. Only great artists, giving themselves to nothing else, truly represent their age. To this we can give no lesser name than genius. Yet we today may neither be near enough to still be under Schoenberg’s spell, nor far enough to reach a finished estimate that his place is with the great masters, rather than the great eccentrics. To those who understand his music, and like it, it is one of the great achievements in the entire history of art. To those who understand it, but dislike it, it is laboriously irrelevant. To those don’t understand it, but still like it, it is fascinating precisely because of its intriguing lack of intelligibility. And to those who don’t understand it, and don’t like it, the emperor has no clothes.

Schoenberg is the classic composer of the twentieth century, the great protagonist of modern music. He is, for me, our Captain Ahab, brooding, possessed, hubristic, and monomaniacal in his confrontation, if I may, with the white whale of atonality. He implores and rallies us, the
members of his crew, to conquer chromaticism, defy the safe shore of the diatonic, and engage the musical unknown. And like Ishmael, we find ourselves transfixed by the glint of his eye—that eye in the photo in your conference packet. We get caught up in the magnitude of his quest, like Webers and Bergs, and it becomes by contagion our own.

This alone may be why Schoenberg is great, even if he is ultimately swallowed by the sea, and we're left clinging to his coffin. For through him, because of him, we too have encountered the leviathan. And if we can imagine the great soul of music, to borrow my end from Mrs. Woolf, if we can imagine music’s spirit “come alive and standing in our midst, she would undoubtedly bid us to break her and bully her, as well as honor and love her—for so her youth is renewed and her sovereignty assured.”


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC
WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director
INSTITUTE ON JAZZ MEETS POP
June 15-18, 2008
Eastman School of Music
Rochester, New York
Welcome to the Institute

Welcome friends and colleagues to the eighth annual Mannes Institute. I’d like to thank Dean Lowry, not just for allowing us to be here, but for coming to our opening session and extending such a warm and gracious welcome to this distinguished institution. It is an honor for me to bring the Institute to Eastman, and establish ties between our country’s best small conservatory and its best larger one. As some of you might know, the Institute is funded entirely by private people, with no institutional support from Mannes, Eastman, or any place else. This event is the achievement of a small handful of imaginative individuals whose only goal is the advancement of musical scholarship.

Kicking off the Institute each summer is a momentous occasion for me. To quote Shakespeare, it’s the one time of year I’m dressed in a little, brief authority. In between, I have,
as Thoreau said of himself, a real genius for staying at home. Over the next four days, however, in the halls of this magnificent building, we will discover a different vision of who we are, or who at least I think we might try to be.

The Institute has a watchword: “Deliberate with Coolness, Analyze with Criticism, Reflect with Candor, and Evaluate with Conviction.” This mostly comes from an article published in 1787 under the pseudonym Cato during the debate over the adoption of the U.S. Constitution. Many historians think the author was New York’s Governor George Clinton—no relationship to Hillary—but there’s no conclusive evidence. Against almost unanimous support for ratification, Cato urged people to think for themselves, by deliberating with coolness, analyzing with criticism, reflecting with candor, and evaluating with conviction. This challenge of independent thought and reasoned skepticism articulates the credo of the Institute. The logo on your badges, da Vinci’s Vitruvian Man, is an iconic symbol of the spirit of rational inquiry that guides our deliberations.

The Mannes Institute is an experiment in collaborative learning. We’re a community in constant flux and realignment, with new members coming and going, all of whom think and care deeply about music and seek a forum to share their insights, doubts, and discoveries. This is a place where we can discuss ideas among peers who appreciate, stimulate, and challenge us in a mutually respectful way. We are invited to examine our own thinking out loud before others in a safe and receptive environment.

The purpose of the Institute is to air our views, not on the mute and tidy pages of academic journals or books, but in the dynamic give and take of an interactive classroom, where good spirited haggling, trial balloons, half-baked truths, sudden intuitions, and speculative rebuttals are all fair game. Our modality is one of mutual engagement. We welcome dissent and debate rather than the uniformity of groupthink on one hand, or the pitfalls of insularity on the other. We affirm a noble tradition of humanistic inquiry premised on the rigorous testing of ideas through collegial interrogation, rooted in venerable disciplines of independent thought, critical examination, and free-ranging discourse. We thrive on what Virginia Woolf calls the stimulus of contradiction.

The Institute presents myriad opportunities for spontaneous conversations and collaborations both in our workshops and the social spaces in between. Within our cadre of 45, there are innumerable subsets and combinations for interaction. I urge you to drop your shyness and inhibitions, to relax and take your intellectual shoes off, let your academic hair down, and get to know one another as friends. Reach out to others, particularly those you don’t yet know or whose expertise lies elsewhere, in a warm and receptive way. Be available, curious, and inclusive. Branch out. Join in. Express yourself. There’s no hierarchy here, not a lot of structure, no one who doesn’t belong, and no one who doesn’t have something valuable to contribute.

The people in this room embody the current state of jazz and pop scholarship gathering together 75 years after Sophisticated Lady and 50 years after Great Balls of Fire. Over the next four days, in a posture of monastic retreat in the midst of a teeming festival, cloistered in one of the most esteemed conservatories in the world, we will hold up a mirror to our music and to ourselves as a band of brothers and sisters with a unified mission.

Our congress is a momentous occasion in the evolution and intersection of two evolving disciplines. We are at the forefront of our field, imparting through our dedication increased stature and credibility to these vital vernacular repertoires. We’ve come a long way from Adorno. Whether it’s a Bird or a Beatle we’re chasing, a Door or a Trane, we’re here to proclaim their genius and validate musical traditions beyond the stagnant pale and ossification of the
concert hall, with living roots in vibrant cultures and real people speaking living languages we understand and sing ourselves. We’ve cast off the chains of cultural colonialism and the high-art pretensions of musical modernism. We’re here to represent. This is change we can believe in—yes we can.

And so goes the Institute itself. This is a different creature than our normal academic conferences. We’re about change here too. The Institute’s more participatory and less formal, more candid and less programmed. We’re more personal, more challenging, and frankly, more satisfying. We consider things in depth, with attention to detail. We roll our sleeves up. We’re more about process than results. We’re improvisational rather than compositional. Our workshops are jam sessions, not stage performances. This is a safe haven where we can drop our titles and pretenses, thrive on a riff, test drive a theory, look an assumption in the eye, and become students once again.

Our day job as scholars is to think, but the actual business of thinking, our intuitions and embryonic conceptions, unfortunately have little place in our professional conduct. The rich shadows of speculation are rarely cast in our finished products. We’re not allowed to feel our way, hover on the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. Traditional scholarly modalities are more orthodox—there’s little room for doubt.

The Institute has a different agenda. We offer a site for the construction and deconstruction of paradigms, a locus for active self-critique. In our circular workshops, polished arguments and nascent hypotheses confront and cross-fertilize each other. We plant seeds that will bear the fruit of further research. We’re gathered here at Eastman not just to learn from each other, but also to teach each other. Each of you is here not just to take, but also to give. Ours is not a solitary endeavor. It’s too easy, as someone said of Emerson, to be a sage in one’s own study. Here our ideas are subjected to instant scrutiny and supplementation, tested and enhanced in the crucible of collegial collaboration and interrogation.

Let me be perfectly honest: the task before you is rigorous. The Institute is not a stroll in the park. You are all welcome here, but there’s a price of admission. Something is asked of you while you’re here. There’s work to be done, not just by our coaches, but by each of you as players on the team. Our scorecard depends on you. So unless necessary, you’re expected to commit and be present with us fully in mind, body, and spirit each step of the way, at all events including our workshops, our plenary meetings, our daily meals, and our social gatherings. Don’t wander off mentally, physically, or otherwise. You’re expected to participate, to speak up, to raise issues, pose questions and offer insights, and to share of yourself as a colleague.

The relentless pace and intensity of the program, for which in some quarters I’ve earned the reputation of De Sade, is designed to induce fatigue, a sort of dizziness Derrida calls “intellectual vertigo.” By eroding our resistance, we loosen convictions in our own habits of thought. We’ll become exhausted yet exhilarated. If you’re lucky, you’ll experience a kind of conceptual brainwashing, or at least a bath, if only temporarily, as a predicate for private reflection and reconstruction in the recovery room at home. We’ll carry away a memory of achievement, of having been through something demanding yet worthwhile, and of having done it together. We’ll earn our diplomas, and be proud of them.

So what is the Mannes Institute? It’s both a physical place and a conceptual space. It’s a nursery of reflections where we think aloud and build camaraderie in a deeper and more meaningful way. It’s an activity, a mode of noncompetitive and egalitarian interaction. It’s our constitutional convention. As patient scholars secluded in our studies, chained to our committees,
immersed in our families, entrenched in our teaching, what opportunities do these four special
days present?

Now, I would say is our time for ourselves, our time to think together side by side. Now is
our time to drop our ranks and resumes and teach not just our students, but each other as well.
Now is our time to take stock of our work, assess where we are, and where we want to go. Now
is our chance to ask questions without answers, and float answers yet to be tested. Now is our
time to delve deeper into music we love, and start dating music we’ve just met. Now is our
moment to celebrate diversity and multiple perspectives, and to appreciate the richness of who
we are as scholars, as colleagues, as friends, and simply as people.

This is what makes the Institute so special. It’s why I do what I do, why we’re in our eighth
year, and why I think each of you is here. There’s nothing quite like it in the world. So just as
Dean Lowry welcomed you to Eastman, this magnificent shrine of music, I welcome you to our
musical think tank, the Mannes Institute, this “discursive democracy” in Habermas’ words,
where all of you matter, and each of you has a vital role to play.

You’ve done all this work, and come all this way. We’re finally here. I’m inviting you now
to seize the day, and maximize the astonishing potential we’ve collectively brought to bear. I’m
asking you to bond together as a team, a band of scholars, yoking yourselves more closely to one
another in a fraternity of discourse, so we may gradually come to think and feel as one, united
paradoxically through a polyphony of voices, so we may emerge in the end, each of us
revitalized though a genuine meeting of the minds.

2008 Institute Faculty: Henry Martin and Walt Everett (co-chairs), Lori Burns, John
Covach, Cynthia Folio, Steve Larson. Fellows: Fernando Benadon, David Carson Berry, Nicole
Biamonte, Benjamin Bierman, Barbara Bleij, Mark Butler, Matt Butterfield, Guy Capuzzo,
Laurent Cugny, Christopher Doll, Andrew Flory, Karen Fournier, Ben Givan, Sumanth
Gopinath, Dai Griffiths, Daniel Harrison, Dave Headlam, Richard Hermann, Robert Hodson,
John Howland, Timothy Hughes, Patricia Julien, Timothy Koozin, Elizabeth Marvin, Horace
Maxile, James McGowan, Jocelyn Neal, Shaugn O’Donnell, Joti Rockwell, Keith Salley, Janna
Saslaw, Ramon Satyendia, Daniel Sonenberg, Mark Spicer, Steven Strunk, Robert Wason, Carl
Woideck, Albin Zak. Special Guests: Albin Zak, Lewis Porter, Harold Danko, Joyce

THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED SCHOLARSHIP IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON MUSIC AND THE MIND

JUNE 26-29, 2009
Mannes College of Music
New York City

Opening Speech

103
Welcome friends and colleagues to the ninth annual Mannes Institute on Music and the Mind. Kicking off this event each summer is always an exciting experience for me. To quote Shakespeare, it’s the one time of year I’m dressed in a little, brief authority. In between, I have, as Thoreau said of himself, a real genius for staying at home. Over the next 4 days, huddled together in this intimate conservatory, I hope we will discover a refreshingly different vision of who we are, and what our profession might be.

The Mannes Institute is an experiment in humanistic learning. We’re a community in a constant state of flux and realignment, with new members coming and going, all of whom think and care deeply about music and seek a forum to share their insights, doubts, and discoveries. This is a place where we can discuss ideas among peers who appreciate and challenge us in a respectful way. We are invited to examine our own thinking out loud before others of similar mind in a safe and supportive context.

The purpose of the Institute is to air our views, not on the silent pages of scholarly journals or spotlight stages of hotel halls, but in the dynamic give and take of interactive workshops, where good spirited haggling, trial balloons, half-baked truths, sudden intuitions, and speculative rebuttals are all fair game. We welcome dissent and debate rather than the uniformity of groupthink or the pitfalls of intellectual insularity. We affirm a noble tradition of humanistic inquiry, premised on the rigorous testing of ideas through collegial interrogation, rooted in venerable disciplines of independent thought, critical examination, and free-ranging discourse. We thrive on what Virginia Woolf calls the stimulus of contradiction.

The next four days will present myriad opportunities for impromptu conversations both in our workshops and the social breaks in between. Within our cadre of 45, there are innumerable subsets and combinations for collaboration. I invite you to drop your inhibitions, take your intellectual shoes off, let your academic hair down, and approach one another as friends. Reach out in a cordial and receptive way, particularly to those who you don’t know yet or whose expertise lays elsewhere. Be curious and inclusive. Share yourself. There’s no hierarchy here, not a whole lot of structure, no one who doesn’t belong, and no one who doesn’t have something worthwhile to contribute.

Look around you. The people in this room are extraordinary. They embody the current state of music cognition as a field. You’re intelligent, talented, and interesting. Starting now until Monday afternoon, we’re going to all be together in intense interaction in close quarters. We’ll become a band of musicological brothers and sisters in a posture of monastic retreat, cloistered within the walls of an historic conservatory in Manhattan, the Lenape island of many hills, and the birthplace of the kosher pickle.

This cognitive congress is a landmark in the emergence of a rapidly changing and revolutionary field of study. It’s a knock on the doors of our profession that bold new ways of thinking are in the air. The linguistic turn has taken a cognitive twist. You are on the frontline of this revolution, imparting greater stature to your own cause through our collective endeavor.

There hasn’t been a Mannes Institute about something this shiny since we took on transformational theory back in 2003. That was as cutting edge then as this is now. Leonard Meyer is our patron saint today, as David Lewin was back then. But while there’s something fresh about cognition, there’s also something fairly old about it too. In fact, if I were to supplement our six brilliant workshops, I’d suggest one on the history of cognition itself. Either that, or the role of cognitive studies in sleep indolence.

Aside from its familiar 19th- and early 20th-century Germanic roots, see Ebbinghaus, et al., how about that overlooked classic of Renaissance psychology, Robert Burton’s *Anatomy of
Melancholy back in 1621? “We can understand all things by the mind,” Burton surmised, “but what she is, we can’t apprehend.” Or even better, what about Montaigne, who declared, “I am myself the matter of my book,” and created the personal essay as a map of his own mind. And if we bracket out methodology, the study of cognition dates all the way back to Aristotle, or perhaps even Homer. Name me a greater study of the human mind than the Iliad twenty-four centuries before Hamlet.

Anyway, before these heady proceedings get too far out of hand into realms I’m an entire encyclopedia behind the rest of you, to quote Charles Lamb, let me do what I can and point out as a former student of jurisprudence a few interesting connections between music, cognition, and law. I apologize for this and other digressions, but if I didn’t write this speech, my entire time would be devoted to hotel reservations, disgruntled applicants, audiovisual snafus, and cream cheese.

The law has a lot to do with cognition. One of the articles Bob assigned for his workshop says, “imagine that a rat is frozen during its travels.” Having practiced law for 17 years, this wasn’t hard for me to do. Now as you may know, the Greek word for melody, nomos, also means law. It’s related to noumenon, or that which is conceived, as opposed to phenomenon, that which is perceived, and in turn with nous, Greek for the mind itself. This etymology suggests a nexus between music and the cognitive function of law, as a means of structuring and shaping reality. Nomos simultaneously connotes both a musical practice and a social practice imparting rational form to inchoate phenomenal reality. Music and law are thus parallel manifestations of the configurative propensities of the human mind. The law-like operations of cognition define the categorical structure of music and society as well. Both music and law, to borrow Emerson’s description of nature, are metaphors of the human mind.

The English word law is of Viking origin, entering Old English from Old Norse around 1000 A.D. as lahg, or something laid down, just like a log or piece of wood as a boundary marker between two adjacent fields of property. I don’t need to tell you that boundaries play a crucial role of demarcation in the chalking of perceptual data. To perceive something is to establish borders or divisions that differentiate it from something next door. The common expression “to lay down the law” implies this same creation of boundaries to impart cognitive meaning and social stability in the world of law. The German word for law, Gesetz, also means that which is put or set down, paralleling an associated English derivation of law from lay. The Greek word for law, dike, carries the same connotation of a marker of boundaries, as Kant put it, distinguishing what is mine from what is thine. Law then, both as explicit legislation and implicit norms of conduct, constitutes a boundaried grid or cognitive blueprint for the collective chalking of our reciprocal rights, duties, and expectations into shared social schemas, or schemata per Frederic Bartlett. A sophisticated conception of law recognizes that it retains the latitude of a system of constraints that preserve, indeed safeguard, individual liberty of flexible navigation, nuanced interpretation, and autonomous decision-making within its structural frame.

Now you can’t come to Mannes without encountering Schenker. Can’t be done. He’s the elephant at the door around here, so I might as well lead him into the ring. This juridical notion of structured freedom Stufen that I’m describing resonates in the musical synthesis between and prolongation in Schenkerian analysis. Schenker studied law at a time when blazing a special German path or Sonderweg between democracy and autocracy was a central jurisprudential theme. Schenker’s notes are actual law-abiding citizens within a tonal society, a meritocracy governed by a jurisprudence of musical behavior. The pillars of the Ursatz function as intermittent boundaries of legal structure and formal differentiation, demarking prolongational
fields of contrapuntal freedom within a larger constitutional harmonic framework. Just as music is a microcosm of schematic expectation and a cognitive map of aural reality, law is a macrocosm of schematic expectation and a cognitive map of social reality. As music is a grammar that structures time, law is a grammar that structures space. They mirror one other, as Schenker himself observed, as conceptual fractals on parallel Schichten manifesting recurrent categories of the mind.

Now in addition to these jurisprudential dimensions, cognition has obvious anthropological ones as well. We’re talking about people in societies, not brains in a bowl. However physiological, cognitive functions are necessarily filtered though the refractory lens of a particular culture. Borrowing Stephen Tyler’s definition, cultures are themselves cognitive organizations of material phenomena. I’d like to briefly share two anecdotes Morton Feldman told me, or I think he told me, over 30 years ago. If cognition stakes out the musically normative, then as Bob Snyder might agree, Feldman is the Che Guevara of cognition. You all know his music, or anti-music if you must, but just how it fits into your schema of schemas is a question I’ll defer. I’ll presume he basically falls into your memory sabotage, nuance overload, anti-categorical category. In any event, Feldman once told a story about Claude Levi-Strauss, illustrating the cultural relativity of music that he evidently felt justified his own promiscuous aesthetic license.

Levi-Strauss apparently went to some remote island in the Pacific, sat a half-naked native down on a rock, and played a Beethoven symphony on a concealed tape recorder. When he asked the native what he thought of it, the guy replied, “thought about what?” The point is he didn’t even hear the music as organized, meaningful sound. I guess he didn’t even hear it as noise. I’ve never been able to verify Feldman’s report in an original source, but you get the drift. What we call normal, biological, or cognitive doesn’t necessarily mean absolute, or more importantly, aesthetic. That’s what Meyer calls that the error of universalism. We’re dealing in cognitive constraints, not commands, and even those can be stretched or broken. As Lenny cautioned, “some of the greatest music is great precisely because the composer hasn’t feared to let his music tremble on the brink of chaos.”

The other Feldman story’s a little more graphic. Morty—that’s what we called him—was strolling through a garden on a hot summer day when someone criticized him for violating the natural laws of music. Feldman said nothing. A few minutes later, he reached out, grabbed a beautiful butterfly, admired it for a second, and then smashed the bug on his leg. “That’s what I think of nature!” he yelled. So music and biology may be antithetical. As Woody Allen put it, “I am two with nature.”

What’s new about music cognition, of course, is its methodology. It’s a paradigm shift from the traditional business of music theory. And there’s the connection with the Institute. Our methodology is new too. The Institute represents a similar paradigm shift within our profession away from traditional modes of scholarship. We’re more participatory and less formal, more candid and less programmatic. We’re more personal, more penetrating, and frankly, more fun. We roll up our sleeves and consider things in depth. We’re more spontaneous that structured, and more about process than results. We’re improvisational rather than compositional. Mannes is a safe haven where we can drop our titles become students once again.

Our job as scholars is to think, but the cognitive process of thinking, our intuitions and embryonic conceptions, have little place in our professional conduct. The rich shadows of speculation are rarely cast in our finished products. We’re not allowed to feel our way, hover on
the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. Conventional scholarly discourse is more orthodox—there’s little room for doubt.

Here we have a different agenda. The Institute offers a site for the construction and deconstruction of paradigms, and a locus for active self-critique. Polished arguments and nascent hypotheses confront and cross-fertilize each another. We plant seeds to bear the fruit of further research. We’ve come together to teach each other socratically. Each of you is here not just to take, but also to give. Our ideas are subjected to instant scrutiny and supplementation, tested and improved in the crucible of collaboration. Ours is not a solitary endeavor. It’s too easy, as someone said of Emerson, to be a sage in one’s own study.

Let me get a little bolder now and say straight up what I think is missing in our regular conferences. I know we’ve got 3 incumbent SMT presidents on board. The sitting one is coming unfashionably late and will be dealt with accordingly. I even spot a few AMS card carriers as well. I’m glad you’re all here and I won’t pull any punches. Now I realize these big organizations and this humble Institute serve different functions. If they’re our gatherings of rank and file—and we need that too—then you folks are the equivalent of Navy seals. And please don’t get me wrong. I’ll party on with the best of you in Montreal, just like Washington Irving, who said, “those who drink beer, think beer.”

But I’m not talking about that here. I’m addressing the subjective experience and intellectual return on paper presentations. You know, where we take turns standing up in front of the class and recite our homework, word for word, bookended by an abstract and a few token questions. I don’t want to overstate my case, as some claim I’m prone to do, but what’s missing at these horse and pony shows is dialogue. The speakers, or shall I say readers, are all soloists. The logistics are staged, and a bit too heroic.

Papers are soliloquies. We converse with no one, and encounter no otherness. No interlocutor intrudes on the insularity of our conception or experience. The platform is too static and the format too fragmented. There’s no sustained debate or discourse, no thread of continuity, and no instruction or interaction. The conference paper rarely hints or suggests anything, but to pickpocket Charles Lamb again, it unloads its cargo in perfect order. Surmises, misgivings, detours, and blind alleys have no place in its vocabulary. It claims, or at least pretends, that everything is perfectly clear, impeccably worked out long ago. It’s distilled as a narrative, bolstered with evidentiary diagrams, its argument unassailable, purged of soggy patches, illicit inferences, and tenuous connections.

Imitating its rich uncle, the journal article, the conference paper comes dressed in jacket and tie, clicks open its briefcase, pulls out a typed manuscript, and speaks authoritatively in an oratorical voice, rather than casually in a conversational one. All in all, it just sounds like read writing, a trial run for a hopefully expanded publication in the chart-infested pages of some weighty tome on a librarian’s shelf. These are generally delivered in a ploddingly dull tone, eyes downcast without vocal cadence, at a hasty reading pace rather than a slower listening one. The spectators consist of a shotgun scatter of colleagues inattentively rifling through your handout, probably in search of a mistake, many of whom you don’t know and don’t want to meet. These ritual incantations often take on a trance-like quality, reenacting some professional rite of passage that we collectively endure, out of inertia, indifference, or mutual respect, at least long enough to get us through to the plush buffets we surreptitiously crash upon parole.

Once the recitation is complete, the liturgical response intoned from the chair is a benedictory “thank you, X, for that most interesting presentation,” followed then by a chorus of perfunctory amens posing as questions, to create the illusion of denominational belief through
feigned audience participation. There’s a number of recurrent schemata here, although not, Bob, of Italian extract. For instance, there’s the didactic schema, pedantically suggesting some plausible avenue of research about something you most likely ignored because you weren’t interested in it in the first place. Next there’s the waste of time schema, from someone who has absolutely no idea what they’re talking about, but figures it’s worth a long shot to at least stand up in front of their peers and just pretend. We all know the pseudo schema, inevitably launched by someone, usually junior, seeking to demonstrate their own clever acuity by delivering a brilliant speech disguised as a question. You might also encounter the grumpy landlord schema from someone, most often senior, who has proprietary worries that you’re trespassing to close to their theoretical tenement, and deserve a cautionary shot across the bow.

Finally, if you’re lucky, you just might come away with one modestly useful tidbit to incorporate into your revision, if you ever get around to it, so it won’t be a total wash. On the other hand, you’re just as likely to elicit no comments or questions at all. Then your only satisfaction comes when the blister of indifference at best, irrelevance at worst, lanced only by the momentary pity of the panel chair, finally bursts and you can graciously sit down again.

In the end though, none of this really matters. The show goes on, and before you know it, the next reader’s up there muttering their own script on a totally unrelated topic with a entirely new set of formulas and acronyms we’re all expected to somehow learn, use, and teach all over again. After a few minutes, no one can remember what you said anyway. Your pile of handouts in the rear of the room become instant pieces of musicological archaeology, relics for vandals to plunder, before they’re sacked and burned by the hotel porter ten stories below. But, hey, during those 15 minutes of fame, who cares? You own the stage. Besides, your lecture comes with scholarly guarantees and a seal of approval by the program committee. Another notch in the old resume. Oh sure, there’ll be a few good talks to twitter about later, but even those are enshrined and embalmed with collegial eulogies, like impressive, brilliant, or something else that smacks of performativity rather than persuasion.

Sorry, my friends, to quote McCain, but for me our conferences are at best diversions, and at worst, alienating, anachronistic, and downright lonely. Durkheim would have a field day. As intellectual experiences for the most part they are, alas, unwieldy, unfocused, unsatisfying, and quite unfashionable. They’re the intellectual equivalent of Walmart’s or street fairs, sort of busy-fun, but glutted with too many kids and too many fruit stands to do some serious shopping. Call me elitist or just romantic, but I’m looking for an intimate coffee house, a quiet tavern, or maybe a country inn, some vestige of an earlier, simpler age, where I where I can sit serenely, warmed by the fire of friends, savor ideas, and converse with cognoscenti. I’m searching for a more congenial court to serve and return the volley of playful disputation. Like Rip Van Winkle, I long for what Washington Irving called “a kind of perpetual club of the sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village.” Well, this Institute is what I managed to come up with, and I built it myself.

The modern format of a soloist unilaterally spewing predigested verities from the pulpit above to a passive audience of patient receptors silently below has become a rather musty mode of scholarly communication. Here we’re more postmodern in that sense, and paradoxically more ancient, and hence more contemporary. At Mannes we’re busy throwing pots, not polishing well-wrought urns. Our trade is thought in process, the narrative of thinking, thinking in its unfolding, rather than the finished products of thought. We deal in discussion not pontification, in dialogues rather than declamations. Our workshops are suggestive rather than comprehensive. They’re pluralistically filled with hints, glimpses, and germs of imagination.
Our mutual discoveries are imparted as they extemporaneously arise, without codification into scripts or waiting full development. Like Socrates himself, we rarely speak with certitude. Our focus is on what Montesquieu called “man thinking” as opposed to “man writing,” and on what Alain portrays as the “dance of thoughts.” Our conversations are open-ended and open-minded. Ideas are immediately greeted by their own refraction through the spectrum of the group. We can test drive a theory and look an assumption in the eye. We get along just fine not reaching a definitive conclusion. As was said of La Rochefoucauld, if you’ll pardon my French, we ply the aesthetics of the unfinished. We’re concerned, in short, with the cognition of cognition itself.

Here at Mannes we discover ideas out loud and try them on for size. We’re into sharing rather than showing, teaching instead of telling. Our reflections are less premeditated, and more the spontaneous reaction to circumstance. Our discussions gradually evolve through accrementition (that was on the spelling bee). We allow ourselves the luxury to browse, thumb through things, and propose possibilities. We pass from one comment to another like food at a picnic. We afford ourselves the leisure to stroll and discover. Like superannuated men and women, we “walk about, not to and from.” Even our term “workshop” announces “work in progress here, hardhats required.” This is work, not a product, and it’s a shop, not a stage. We’re a verb not a noun; a kitchen, not a restaurant; a carpenter bench, not a furniture store. Our discussions aren’t rehearsed soliloquies before an audience of spectators, but messy family affairs, like some pot roast dinner around a big kitchen table, with overlapping thoughts, simultaneous sidebars, detours and dead ends, retractions and digressions, jokes and interrupts, misunderstandings and the frustration of dangling threads. Our food and drink, books and scores, papers and pens are all scattered about, just like our own desks at home.

So here’s what I propose. Let’s drop our pretenses and protocols, and get more real. Let’s walk up and introduce ourselves, teach ourselves, and learn from ourselves. Let’s toss ideas around, have a wastebasket handy, and not mind using it. Let’s not get miffed by being questioned or challenged, or try to impress each other, or pretend we’re always right. Let’s forget about our ranks and resumes, and just be ourselves. Here’s a relevant quotation I came across from an essay on talk and talking by Robert Louis Stevenson. “Talk is fluid, tentative, and continually in further search and progress, while written words remain fixed, become idols even to the writer, found wooden dogmatisms, and preserve flies of obvious error in the amber of the truth. In talk a jest intervenes, the solemn humbug is dissolved in laughter, and speech runs forth out of the grooves into the open fields of nature. Conclusions are not often reached by talk any more than by private thinking. The profit is in the exercise, and above all, the experience.”

“The sense of joint discovery is nonetheless giddy and inspiring. We mustn’t be pontiffs holding doctrine, but huntsmen questing after elements of truth. Neither must we be students to be instructed, but fellow teachers with whom each may wrangle and agree on equal terms. We must reach some solution, some shadow of consent, for without that, eager talk becomes a torture. But we don’t wish to reach it cheaply or quickly, or without the pleasures of tussle and effort. True talk comes only with the brethren of our spirits. It’s a thing to relish with all our energy, while we still have it, and to be grateful for forever.”

Now the Institute only has a few actual guidelines, and as I recently discovered these the same as Jurgen Habermas’ rules of ethical discourse. His first rule is that everyone’s allowed to take part. Here we’ll crank that up a notch so that everyone’s not only allowed to participate, but expected to do so. Try not to just sit back here and soak it all in. Our modality is one of active engagement not passive observation, with a premium on participation. Each of us has not only
the right to listen, but also the responsibility to talk, whether it’s an insight or a question. So if you came here expecting to fly low under the radar, because you either are or think you are unschooled, unprepared, unacquainted, uncertain, unwilling, or whatever else may be holding you back from jumping into the fray, please leave that strategy at the door, put on an apron, come on into the kitchen, and pick up a spoon like the rest of us.

Habermas’ second rule of discourse is that any idea may be examined and questioned. Nothing’s automatically immune from critical evaluation here. No one should be so devoted to some sacred cow, even one they’ve nurtured from a calf, that they’re unwilling to appraise it at current market value. As Stevenson says, we’re not clergy preaching gospel, but inquisitors of truth. The scrutiny of our peers can be intimidating, but it’s in good faith, it’s why we’re here, and it shouldn’t evoke unwarranted pride or defensiveness. Please don’t be so overly enamored with a particular thought that you can no longer continue to think. We’ve all come here to learn from each other, and from our experts above all. But let’s not be preaching to the choir. There’s a healthy diversity of perspectives here, and our discussions should exploit rather than suppress that pluralism. There’s also a helluva lot of brainpower on tap. We want to maximize our cognitive capacity in a constructive and challenging way.

Habermas’ third rule of discourse is that any new idea can be tossed into the mix. As long as you’re sincere, there’re no prohibited assertions and no dogmas to offend. We all bring different backgrounds and that’s exactly what we want. If you didn’t belong here, you wouldn’t be here. So be prudent, but don’t censor yourself or think what you have to add is irrelevant. The Institute works through the cumulative effect of conversation. The dynamism the group and its best ideas are discovered through an incremental process of trial and error, by thinking and speaking aloud. One could argue along with Kleist, who wrote on the gradual fabrication of thoughts while speaking, that speech itself often creates thoughts rather than vice versa. If some ideas are censored, we’re less likely to generate much that’s new. Let’s stick with the First Amendment. As long as no one cries fire, anything goes.

These guidelines need to be complemented by a sense of group solidarity and ethical conduct. This means unflagging sensitivity to our six distinguished faculty members, to all of our fellow participants, and to the overall mission and spirit of Institute itself. In terms of me, I’m used to insensitivity. Our communication requires a degree of debate, dialogue, and airing of differences. But we must always do this in a mutually respectful way. I find the study of cognition has a humanizing impact on music theory by focusing more on the human listener rather than the inanimate score, on the subject instead of the object. Likewise in our own deliberations, we have a golden rule of discourse. There’s etiquette of interaction. Holding the attitude of the other, as Meyer says, will foster a we-perspective that gradually displaces the I-perspective each of us brings to the table. Eventually we’ll merge into a thinking whole, a single mind with multiple voices, or what Habermas calls a discursive democracy collaborating as one.

Here’s the caveat: the task before you is rigorous. This Institute is not a stroll in Central Park or a vacation in the Big Apple. If you don’t know by now, it’s hard work. You’ve signed onto a cognitive chain gang. I’m summoning you to be front and center, body and soul, at all our events, both cognitive and social. We’re here to think together and play together. Unless so stated, nothing is optional, except perhaps sleep—and only then with proper medical authorization, or at least a note from home.

The pace and intensity here at the Mannes compound, for which in certain left-wing quarters, hotbeds like Chicago and NYU, or perhaps our slumbering neighbor to the north, where I’m covertly maligned as a musicological Dick Cheney (or is it Lon Cheney?), well this
necessary rigor will inevitably induce scholarly fatigue, a sort of dizziness that Derrida calls
intellectual vertigo. This is good. By eroding our resistance, we’ll lower our barriers, bond with
comrades, and loosen our certitude in habit-forming and habitual habits of thought. You’ll
become exhausted, yet exhilarated. And if you work particularly hard, you may even experience
a kind of euphoria, a conceptual brainwashing, or at least a good bath, all as a predicate for
reflection and reconstruction in the recovery room at home. You come to Mannes as well-
researched recruits—you’ll leave as musical marines. The profit, as Stevenson says, is in the
exercise, and above all, the experience. Once this is over, you’ll carry away a backpack of ideas,
but also an indelible memory of achievement, of having been through something demanding yet
worthwhile, and of having done it together. You’ll earn your badges, your pins, and your
discharge diploma—and be proud of them.

So in conclusion, I detect to your relief, what is the Mannes Institute? It’s both a physical
place and a conceptual space. It’s a nursery for reflections, a theatre of interaction, where we
think aloud and build camaraderie in a deeper and more meaningful way. It’s a musical think
tank of postmodern pluralism, trading the narrative of monologue for the give and take of
dialogue. It’s an activity of imagination, a transformation in communication, and a humanistic
mode of noncompetitive scholarship. If SMT versus AMS are the national conventions of our
two major musical parties, electing presidents, vice presidents, and executive boards, with staged
floorshows of prepackaged speeches to hotel halls of delegates, then we at Mannes are a
nonpartisan town hall meeting of good musical friends and neighbors.

As scholars secluded in our studies, entrenched in our teaching, chained to our committees,
immersed in our families, what opportunities do these 4 special days present? Now, I would say
is our time for ourselves, and our chance to think together. Now is our time to teach not just our
students, but each other too. Now is our time to take stock of our field, assess where it is, and
consider where it ought to go. Now is our time to ask questions without answers, and suggest
answers yet to be tested. Now is our time to be Ricouer’s masters of suspicion, and examine our
own assumptions of thought. Now is our time to welcome fresh views from colleagues, to
cherish the diversity of multiple perspectives, and celebrate the richness of who we are.

You’ve done a lot of work, come a long way, and you’re finally here. As ship’s captain,
about to join the crew, I’m inviting you now to grasp our mission, seize this moment, and
maximize its meaning. I’m asking you to come together as a community of scholars, a team of
thinkers, and a cadre of cognitivists. Welcome to Mannes, and to your Institute, as much as mine,
on Music and the Mind. For these next few days, let’s take down our fences, and yoke ourselves
more closely to one another in a fraternity of discourse, so we may come to think and feel as one.
Only then can we emerge, in sweet anticipation, our own cognition revitalized, through a
genuine meeting of the minds.

Now let’s get busy.

**Personal Introductions**

An innovative program like the Institute couldn’t exist without a creative institution to
provide it a home. And that institution in turn couldn’t exist without a leader with a sense of
purpose and vision. We’re lucky to have someone like this at Mannes, and in our profession. So
please let introduce my boss, my colleague, and my good friend, our Dean of Mannes, Joel
Lester, who’ll present our musical performance.

Before I turn this over to Bob Gjerdingen, who’ll introduce Gene Narmour, our special
guest, I’d just like to share briefly a parable of how I came to know Gene.
I’m a Schenkerian by birth. During my baptism by Cardinal Schachter and Bishop Burkhardt many years ago, I stumbled upon Gene’s heretical tract, *Beyond Schenkerism*. I was like a young churchman clutching Copernicus, staring into the sun. The book singed my eyes, yet I simply couldn’t turn away. I will deny any repetition of this at Mannes, but I was enamored by Narmour. I surreptitiously wrote its courageous author a cryptic note in private admiration. Not necessarily because I believed him—I didn’t know what I believed—but rather for his brilliant iconoclasm.

And then, my prolonged period of Ursatzian indoctrination began. I renounced the temptation of heresies and Pharisees, and began my Anstieg to structural salvation. I transcribed the Scrolls of Oster—and chanted the Psalms of Salzer. I studied the *Five Line of the Heinrichian Pentateuch*—and prophetic book of Yonas and the whale—or was it a big fish? I pilgrimmed to the Ringstrasse—and the Lower East Side. I davened with Rothstein—and sedered with Burstein. I received communion from Padre Samarotto—and disputed the blasphemous Tymoczko. My soul was purged through reduction.

After years of ritual incantation and flagellation, I eventually donned the robe and entered Our Sacred Shrine of The Holy Kopfton, as you see me standing humbly before you here today. I delivered the geocentric good news to others. The name of Narmour did not pass my lips. My early epistle of infidelity remained hidden in the musical closet as a youthful indiscretion, atoned through an abundance of good papers and faith alone. I’m only now disclosing its skeletal remains to you, in confidence and trepidation, within the confines of these hallowed walls.

It was finally several years later, actually last spring, that I came face to face with the man who had rocked my world with his analytic heliocentrism. And that, in a most beautiful way, was at the funeral of Lenny Meyer. I was honored to be there and celebrate one of the most revolutionary musical thinkers of our time, a man I had never met, who just passed away.

But I will confess, I was more honored to meet another equally revolutionary thinker, my musical Copernicus, who is very much alive—and more so, to be privileged to invite him as our special emissary of honor—to this Institute, in this sanctuary, to preach of unutterable dualisms, and enlighten us, even further today.

**Jokes**

I’m sorry the session last night went on too long. I guess I was sleeping at the wheel. I got lost in thought, and it was unfamiliar territory.

But I just couldn’t cut Gene off. Near the end there, where he had those tiny print, medieval charts of the universe, I think he succumbed to that old adage, if you can’t convince them, confuse them.

I was looking around at everyone last night during that thunderstorm and I noticed that you all were wearing short sleeves. I concluded it’s because we have the right to bare arms.

The first day of the Institute took a lot out of me. I hate to admit this, but I went home and tried sniffing some coke. But the ice cubes got stuck in my nose.
 Appreciation to our faculty: David, Larry, Eric, Bob, Fred, and Betsy. Appreciation to Troy Etter. Appreciation to Joel and Mannes. Appreciation to members.

The 2010 Mannes Institute is on the Aesthetics of Music, and will be hosted by the University of Chicago. Our distinguished faculty will be chaired by Alex Rehding and Berthold Hoeckner, along with Fred Maus, Daniel Chua, and three others who are here, Susan McClary, Steve Rings, and Martin Scherzinger, plus Lawrence Kramer as special guest. The following year, 2011, we’ll be back in New York celebrating a decade of the Mannes Institute with a special program on the State of the Discipline. I’m working to convene at the elegant Morgan Library and Museum, with an opportunity to inspect its extraordinary collection of original music manuscripts.

After that everything’s up in the air. There’re a number of options. We’re constantly in need of new topics with broad professional appeal and a core faculty that can attract others. One idea might be to downsize to get a little leaner and meaner, with maybe 4 workshops instead of 6, and 30 participants instead of 45. This way we could hone in on more specialized topics. Another idea might be to go to every other year so that people stop taking this for granted.

One colleague even suggested I call it a day and just quit while I’m ahead. A lot depends, of course, on what happens with me personally. As you can imagine, with the notoriety of the Institute, I constantly receive several speaking engagements and offers of employment. Not to toot my own horn, but later this month I’ve been asked to speak to the women’s auxiliary pancake lunch at my temple on “Schenker, Cognition, and God.” And next month I’m lecturing at the Kalamazoo Fireman’s Annual Pig Roast on “Music Theory and Fire.” On a more long-term basis, which would require a sabbatical from Mannes, which they don’t give, I’ve been invited to organize and run a rehab center for swine flu patients and cartel lords in Tijuana.

David Huron over there tells me that the basis of humor is fear. It’s the fear that no one will laugh at your jokes. Well, finally, I guess this is as good a time as any to announce that a major university has offered to commit serious funding to the Institute, which would completely cover the annual costs of all members’ transportation, hotel, and food costs. Unfortunately, the location is quite far away and inaccessible, so I don’t think any of you would really want to go there—Hawaii.

Just as a final matter of housekeeping, I trust you noticed at some point that I put a personal card addressed each of you inside your conference materials. I’d like to think you read it. What I’m asking is that everyone, faculty included, please send me a letter on your university letterhead, preferably a hard copy—I’ll accept pdf with letterhead, but not an email—explaining what these past 4 days meant to you personally and professionally, as well as your larger thoughts about the Institute’s mission and its role in our field. I’m also asking that you do this within a week or two at most, while the coals are still hot and our short-term memories in tact. The longer you wait as the summer proceeds, the less it will mean to you, and the less I’m afraid your letter will mean to me too.

Now I’m not asking for just a polite thank you note, though that’s nice to get too. I’m not asking for some superficial platitudes for promotional purposes either. We don’t need that. In fact, that’s the exact opposite of what I’m looking for. I’ve tried to create a meaningful personal experience for all of you here. It took a huge amount of work, care, and money. Now I’m asking each of you in return for a timely and genuine expression of how you reacted, and what it’s making you think and feel right now. This will also give you a chance to formulate your own
thoughts about the significance of this experience. Since the Institute began in 2001, I’ve collected over 350 of these personal letters from people representing schools around the globe. I say this no matter where you teach, whether it’s the hippocampus or any other campus—rhino campus, crocodile . . .

Since all our deliberations are spontaneous and undocumented, other than the little guestbook most of you signed at my house, these letters are the only historical records of the Institute. So please do this one last thing and contribute to this archive as a favor to me without waiting too long. We’re all busy, I know, me too. But I don’t think I’m asking too much. I’d be grateful if you make this your final act of participation in the Institute.

As a segue, I’d like to share something I received in one of these letters from our insightful young colleague, Sumanth Gopinath at University of Minnesota, about the larger significance of this unusual gathering. He writes: “Abjuring the instrumental reason that characterizes the neoliberal academy today, the Mannes Institute is not merely a courageous intellectual project, one that benefits the field of music theory and indeed the entirety of music studies. It is also a political act.”

I agree with Sumanth. The Institute is a political critique of enshrined professional practices. It’s a vehicle of conscious collaborative learning that cuts against the increasing rationalization of our academic institutions, in Max Weber’s sense of bureaucratic depersonalization. At the same time, it cuts against the increasing democratization of our scholarly conferences, in de Tocqueville’s sense of egalitarian mediocrification. The Institute proposes a radically different conception of who we are and what we do, by combining the spirit of collegiality with the rigor of excellence. We reject the corporatization of college and conference by reviving more humanistic precedents in the Platonic Academy, the Stoic porch, the Florentine Camerata, the Parisian salon, and the London coffeehouse. We infuse the professional with the personal, and return the ingredient of character to cognition. We ally thinking more closely with being, and add to head, a little heart.

The Institute at Mannes is precisely intended to blur, or better, transcend, the traditional boundaries between conventional schemata. This is what makes it different, and gives it its political and moral edge. Sumanth quotes C. Wright Mills in describing the utopian nature of the Institute’s humanistic agenda. Mills wrote in the sixties, in an era of greater idealism, in words, however, that are equally applicable today. “What needs to be understood and changed,” Mills said, “is not merely first this and then that detail of some institution or policy. What needs to be analyzed is the structure of institutions and the foundation of policies. In this sense, both in its criticism and in its proposals, our work is necessarily utopian.”

Yet our primary mission here is not political, but musical. We’ve gathered here to think about music, to be precise, to think about thinking about music. We’re a think tank on thinking. There’s something circular about cognitive studies, like a snake biting its own tail. We are what we eat, and we are what we study. It’s a play within a play, suggesting infinite regression, without as Archimedes said, a place to stand. I’m reminded of George Carlin’s Cartesian double take, “I think, therefore I am . . . I think.” Yet as Emerson reminds us, the mind doesn’t create what it perceives, any more than the eye creates the rose.

As we conclude, let’s think for just a moment beyond the cognitive effect of music, and reflect upon the cognitive effect of the Institute itself. There’re schemas and exemplars afoot here too. The Institute is its own subculture, a social schema of shared norms and expectations. It has its own alchemy, and injects its own chemistry. Applying for admission to an exclusive enterprise like this, and gathering in small groups of smart people, in an intimate conservatory in
a bustling metropolis, all have a cognitive valence of their own. More significantly, sitting in round circles rather than rows, with open floor discussions, communal meals and peer group interaction, nomenclature like “workshops” and “members,” visual symbols like pins, badges and rosters, and the rituals of receptions and diploma ceremonies, all trigger cognitive categories that shape our own process of expectation and concept formation.

Together this cognitive input induces affirmative feelings of confirmation, achievement, belonging, and a larger perception of the meaning and value of working cooperatively together. It’s not just learning about cognition, but cognition about learning that will stick with us in the afterglow. As this experience is internalized, it becomes a stored exemplar, a humanistic archetype embedded in the long-term memory of our collective hippocampus—maintained in a lab somewhere by Vicky Long and Bob Judd. In time it may exert a beneficial ethical and perhaps utopian effect, a la Mills, upon our behavior and profession as a whole, and hopefully elevate how we treat our students and each other as colleagues as well.

The Institute is deliberately designed to bridge our isolation and the inevitable gaps that exist between us all. Our focus is on what Maurice Blanchot calls “plural speech,” and what Edward Hoagland calls “mind speaking to mind.” In this sense, our experience replicates the cognitive effect of rhythm described by the neurobiologist Walter Freeman. Freeman is less concerned about how we are all neurologically the same, and more about how we neurologically differ. He starts by postulating what he calls our “epistemological solipsism” or innate condition of solitude. As we age and become more individuated, our neural pathways become increasingly unique. Our brains grow progressively apart, because of the particularity of our experiences, selective learning, and the subjective knowledge we each thereby create. In a word, as we become ourselves, we become cognitively eccentric.

For human society and a communal reality to exist at all, this psychological gulf must somehow be bridged. Freeman contends that rhythm evolved as a social mechanism to span this interpersonal gap, by inducing a sense of barrier dissolution and oneness with others and the world around us. We hook up through the mutual act of synchronization, by singing, playing, and working together. The hypnotic effect of a steady beat alters the chemistry of our cortex just like alcohol, sex, or mystical practices, causing a release of oxytocin, creating an altered state of consciousness in which our normal sense of individuality dissolves. It lowers our boundaries, weakens our inhibitions, and promotes mutual sympathy, trust, and understanding. Rhythm is social glue. We overcome our separation and achieve communion by acting together through a synchronous pulse. We become more receptive and attuned to one other, and to the group and its goals. By performing in unison we relieve our isolation and feel part of something larger than merely ourselves. We identify with each other and feel one with the school, the sports team, the nation, or the deity. It’s the synchrony of the beat that turns soloists into an ensemble, and the commonality of schemas that fosters communication through the recognition of style.

Music, in short, is audible liquor. It’s our antidote to autonomy, a tool discovered by our early ancestors as a natural means of barrier dissolution, originating through the evolution of brain chemistry to transcend our epistemological solitude. Its biological value lies less perhaps in prediction, and more in connection. The evolutionary leg up may be less psychological, and more sociological. Music is less about you or me, and more about us. It may not express our desire to anticipate as much as our need to communicate. By forging a sense of collaboration and allegiance with each other, music facilitates coherent collective action, the process of socialization, and the formation of human institutions. It affirms our existence by temporarily
releasing us from the isolation that is otherwise a fundamental concomitant of consciousness, and of life itself.

Now I would argue that in its own modest way, the Institute does exactly the same thing. I’m not perverse enough to equate what we’ve done together with sex, though after my sessions I occasionally felt the urge to smoke. A nice wine might be a better choice. I don’t know if any oxytocin flowed for any of you, but the steady rhythm of the Institute, the collective beat of the thing, has the impact, I feel, of at least a good chardonnay.

I have the same fuzzy sensation of boundary dissipation and ego dissolution, identifying and merging with something a little bigger than my own mind. I don’t know, until I read your letters, but maybe you too experienced some communal bridging of your own sense of isolation, through the synchrony of thinking together, in a way I miss at our regular conferences, at least before day’s end, when wine time actually begins.

As scholars, after all, we are by nature solitary beings. Our best ideas, and our most cherished and important ones, only visit when we, and they, are alone. And though I love this Institute for what it is, and value each of you as peers, I would never trade my intellectual privacy, my epistemological solipsism, for anything in the world. Our real workshops, as we all know, lie between our own two ears. That’s my sanctuary, as it’s surely yours.

But as thinkers who must ultimately think alone, in the solitary communion of music and mind, we need all the more a congenial and nurturing place to come up for air and compare notes. In this age of increasing economic and social instability, fraught with tension, when our own profession seems unsure of its path, within an academy threatened by institutional dehumanization, perhaps the Institute’s affirmation of camaraderie, excellence, and embodied engagement in an authentic community of inquiry may offer a small beam of sunlight, even after its magic, like the magic of music, transpires itself.

It’s this utopian vision of the Institute that makes it unique, no matter which subject matter we consider each year. As the author of Treasure Island says, the gold is buried in the experience, or maybe the adventure itself. X marks the spot. Our voyage was about cognition in more ways that one. We’re not just studying music and the mind, but music and our minds. It’s about our state of mind, and the collective consciousness of our field. It’s about us—our own selves.

And though being with you has convinced me that even artificial intelligence is better than being stupid, I’m still not sure I buy Marvin Minsky’s claim that minds—if by that he means us—are merely what brains do. After four days of thinking hard about minds, I’m still perplexed by the mystery of my own, let alone yours. I’m still mystified what make music meaningful, let alone great. And I’m still stuck in the mud with Virginia Woolf, who confesses, “My own brain is to me the most unaccountable of machinery—always buzzing, humming, soaring, roaring, diving—and then buried in mud.” And so I’m still wondering, along with Virginia, “Why? What is this passion for?”

As theorists we believe, or are taught, that there’s something more to music than music itself can inculcate. But it may be that we shall never know more about the mind than we already know by thinking, and our study of cognition teaches us only this—that we’re destined to live in awe of music, and of our own mind—and more we may not know. Nothing puzzles me more than how the mind works; yet nothing troubles me less. Psychologists can test this or tally that, but it’s the unquantifiable subjectivity of the mind, the unfathomable experience of consciousness, that intrigues me most. To give T.S. Eliot a twist, it’s the subjective correlate of
cognition I wish to explore. It’s the journey in rather than out, the sense of I-ness rather than me-ness, where the magic lies. There’s a difference, after all, between having sex, and describing it.

And in the end, I’m more interested in experiencing music than examining it. I’m less invested in how it works, than how it feels. And nobody can quantify that. Maybe that’s why I prefer poetry to psychology, and Montaigne over Meyer. Maybe that’s why I write essays instead of articles, and believe in institutes more than conferences. Perhaps it’s why I’m not a marquis theorist, and why I teach in a small conservatory with a big staircase. Maybe so. Yet I’ll never forget when Carl Schachter told me, “I love Schenker, but I love Mozart more.” And how many of you know that Schenker once said, “where there’s no wonder, there can be no art?”

For me, it’s wondering about music, asking questions about something we love but can’t know, that this Institute is all about. As Charles Lamb said, it’s good to love the unknown. The love of the unknown, or maybe the unknowable, is why I do this. It’s also why I think we’re in our 9th year, and maybe why each of you, in your private way, has joined me too. That’s the cognition of the Mannes Institute. The Institute’s a vessel. How you fill it is up to you. But it’s not just the quality of the wine. It’s the shape of the cup. It’s something we want to grasp and hold on to, even after we’ve consumed what’s inside. Lord knows, it’s not the Grail. I’m no Parsifal, and you’re no Holy Order. It’s just that I can’t find a better pub. Its worth can be measured by the homage of those who imitate it, by the words of those who praise it, and by the faces of those, like you, who drink with me and share it.

Diploma Ceremony


THE MANNES INSTITUTE
ADVANCED STUDIES IN MUSIC

WAYNE ALPERN
Founder and Director

INSTITUTE ON MUSICAL AESTHETICS

June 24-27, 2010
University of Chicago
Chicago, Illinois
OPENING SPEECH

Welcome to Chicago and the tenth Mannes Institute on Musical Aesthetics. Kicking off this event, especially outside of New York, is an exciting experience for me. To quote the Bard, it’s the one time of year I’m dressed in a little, brief authority. In between, I have, as Thoreau said of himself, a real genius for staying at home. This town is full of storied associations, and its university synonymous with rigorous creativity. The aesthetics of our surroundings alone are enough to inspire high thoughts. I’m grateful to the school, and my distinguished colleagues affiliated with it, for the opportunity to convene in these hallowed halls. Huddled together in this most venerable institution, in this most American city, we’ll explore not only the aesthetics of music, but the aesthetics of ourselves, who we are as scholars and colleagues, and what our profession, at its noblest, might hope to attain.

The Mannes Institute is a decade-long experiment in humanistic learning. We’re a nomadic community, in a constant state of flux and realignment, with new members coming and going, all of whom care deeply about music, and seek a forum to share their insights, doubts, and discoveries. This is a transitory site of self-reflection, a collapsible tent of collaborative inquiry, where we dissect ideas with peers who probe them in a penetrating yet considerate way. We take measure of ourselves and our work, by thinking out loud before others of similar disposition, in a nurturing and supportive context. As its director, my job is to create the circumstances under which this experience can best occur for each of you in the most meaningful way, by carving out a common space for collegial convergence. But it’s up to you, and all of us together, to fill this matrix with content and value.

The mission of the Institute is to voice our views, not on the arid pages of academic journals, or the sterile stages of conference ballrooms, but in the dynamic give and take of interactive workshops, an open air market of intellectual exchange, where good spirited haggling, half-baked truths, trial balloons, flash intuitions, and speculative rebuttals are all fair game. The Institute’s a young idea, but with an old mentality. We affirm a venerable tradition of humanistic inquiry, premised on the rigorous testing of concepts through collegial interrogation, rooted in noble disciplines of independent thought, critical examination, and free-ranging discourse. We welcome dissent and debate, rather than the uniformity of consensus, or the solipsism of insularity. We thrive upon curiosity, a healthy skepticism, and what Virginia Woolf calls the stimulus of contradiction.

Take a look around you. The people in this room are extraordinary. Collectively you embody the cutting edge of music aesthetics. Each of you brings a unique background and perspective, some special gift or characteristic to add to the common stock. All of you have been carefully vetted, drafted perhaps, to play a critical role in an operational network of scholars, coming together in order to think and work as one. From now until Sunday, we’ll be in a state of constant hyper-interaction in close quarters. We’ll form a clandestine band of musicological brothers and sisters, in a posture of monastic retreat, cloistered within the ivy walls of this historic seat of learning in the Windy City, the eminent home of Barack, Berthold, Blackhawks, Belushi, Beiderbecke, Bellow, Blagoyevich, Bugs Moran, Betty Ford—and Steve Rings.

The Institute represents a paradigm shift away from traditional modes of scholarship. Our job as theorists and musicologists is to think about music. But the actual process of thinking, our intuitions and embryonic conceptions, have little place in our professional conduct. The rich shadows of speculation are rarely cast in our finished products. We’re not allowed to feel our way, hover on the borderland of truth, or wander in the maze of a probable argument. Conventional scholarly discourse is more orthodox—there’s little room for doubt.
Here we apply a different aesthetic. We’re not limited to unidirectional transfers of distilled information, but prefer a more symbiotic exchange, unscripted, face-to-face, like the lively barter of goods between feisty buyers and sellers in a street fair on the South Side. Ours is not a solitary endeavor. It’s too easy, as someone said of Emerson, to be a sage in one’s own study. Our trade is thought in process, the narrative of thinking, thinking in its unfolding, rather than the end products of thought. Our discoveries are imparted on the fly, as quickly as they arise, without waiting for incubation, codification, or publication. Like Socrates, we speak more from curiosity than certitude. We don’t pretend to have the final word. We allow ourselves the luxury to browse, thumb through things, and as Martin nicely put it, paw at possibilities. We pass from one comment to another like food at a picnic, and try on ideas like a pair of new shoes. Like Charles Lamb’s superannuated man, we walk about, not to and from. We grant ourselves the license to loiter, and the means to meander. We can test drive a theory, and look an assumption in the eye. And we get along just fine not reaching a conclusion. We ply the aesthetics of the unfinished.

Traditional conference papers, as you know, are prefabricated soliloquies. Solemnly delivered as portentous lectures from a lofty perch, elevated to eminence above silent spectators in an antiseptic chamber, the speaker claims, or at least pretends, that everything is perfectly clear, impeccably worked out long ago. As Hazlitt laments, we get upon stilts to tell our thoughts. Information is conveyed with a theatrical cadence and the tone of stage declamation. Conclusions are congealed into a narrative, its argument unassailable, purged of soggy patches, illicit inferences, and tenuous connections. In Lamb’s words, we unload our cargo in perfect order.

Call me a dreamer, a gadfly, or merely nostalgic, but I prefer something a little more intimate—a coffee house or wooded tavern perhaps, maybe a country inn, some vestige of an earlier, simpler age. Like Rip Van Winkle, I long for what Washington Irving called “a perpetual club of sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of the village.” I seek a more congenial court to serve and return the volley of playful disputation. I’d like to warm myself by a crackling fire, smoke a pipe, sip some brandy, and chew the fat with Dr. Johnson.

I journeyed to these distant shores of Lake Michigan, just like the rest of you, to imbibe aesthetical precepts and potations, and drink deeply of the wisdom of my peers. Yet I leave to you, harder students than myself, possessed of prodigious learning and more robust constitutions, to decipher their true worth. I myself have no valuable information to impart, no reasoned abstraction to expound or novel philosophy to preach. Far be it for me to venture an explanation of art. I lack too much the confidence of conviction, or the faith of any following. I embrace the mythology of no school or system. In fact, I have no religion at all—and that I firmly believe.

I’m not in search of more facts to add to my personal collection. I have enough of them. What I need to know, and haven’t figured out, is what do they mean? It’s not detail I seek, but perspective.

My mind, as Addison confessed, is hungry for argument. Yet I have no case to plead, or special cause to prosecute. I simply wish to hear evidence proffered and pondered, controverted and weighed. I reserve, above all, the right to question everything, and everyone. I want to challenge relationships between things that appear compatible, and postulate connections between others that seem incompatible, yet suggest a more mysterious affinity. I hunt for the simplicity of true wisdom, and the déjà vu of recognition, as if I remembered something important, forgotten but known before.

Like Montaigne, I’m not afraid to express an opinion, even beyond my own knowledge,
because it takes measure of me, rather than of the thing itself. Superior learning, yes, but better judgment I concede to none. On matters of discernment, I decline no duel. I’m interested more often in the form of a statement, its manner more than its meaning, and its presentation above its point. Oddities of speech intrigue me most. I dwell upon their cadence instead of content, and attend more for the sake of style, rather than the sake of substance. In plainer words, I’m Ciceronian. I’ll appreciate your rationale, but admire your rhythm, and analyze your rhetoric. I side skeptically with the Sophists, and plead guilty to a natural, though vexatious disposition, toward contrarianism. I hear cold, so say hot; you claim wet, I counter dry. Two-sided thinking. Janus faced. It’s pure reflex: I titrate all thoughts in the crucible of cross-examination. To quote Dante, whose words are better than mine, it pleases me as much to doubt as to know. In that sense, the Institute I suppose, is autobiographical. My idea of an agreeable person, like Disraeli, is someone who agrees with me, yet I’m addicted to adversarially. I hope it may be said of me that I have a just way of thinking, but I don’t change my mind too readily, since I find frailties on all sides. And I’m as doubtful of myself as I am of everything else.

Perhaps I’ve done a greater service by enlarging the experience of others such as you, than by any actual achievement of my own. Still, after ten years I can’t decide whether the benefit I’ve conferred is antiquarian or visionary. Is the Institute a glance back or a glimpse ahead, a recollection or a premonition? What I do know is that it’s something different, and evidently somewhat unique. I’m too modest to say its revolutionary, though others have for me.

The Institute’s defined by a negative dialectic, and specifically its antipathy to the conventions of academia, and the alienation, apathy, and anomie that it too often reflects. Our vision is more intimate, our message more ethical, and our mission more political. It rejects the institutionalization of knowledge and the bureaucracy of scholarship that can dampen our spirit, cloud our camaraderie, and mask true learning.

We disavow, with Baudrillard, the simulacra of academia and its simulation of scholarship. We denounce, with Foucault, its fussiness and overregulation as internalized means of discipline and control. We decry, with Marx, the encroaching capitalization of thought, and the mass production of credentials. We’re determined, with Nietzsche, to rattle cages of outmoded customs and conventions. And we shake a clenched fist at the Palinization of educational standards and professional protocols.

The Institute’s an oasis in what Hazlitt calls the dry desert of learning. We stand for the proposition that it’s the personal, not the public, that matters most. Our goal is to judge our thoughts, but affirm our selves as thinkers. We come to authenticate, validate, rejuvenate, and in some cases, resuscitate. We respond to ideas critically, but to one another positively. We seek above all to humanize our work and our community, and thereby reconnect with ourselves.

To invoke Deleuze for a minute, the Institute unfolds a smooth space of discourse, where thoughts and voices are free to come and go, in contrast to the striated and partitioned grid of higher education. The round configuration of our workshops replaces the traditional linear confrontation between speaker and audience with the interactive geometry of the circle, demoting a centralized perspective, and subordinating the point to the vector. Just as any coordinate within a circle can connect with any other, so may any person in our gathering traverse the diagonal to converse with another. There’s no privileged position of place. Even in the curvature of our plenary semicircles, we are always in the midst of ourselves.

We strive not for the consistency of hierarchical order, but the rhizomatic equalization of a patchwork quilt, a decentered constellation, facilitating creative lines of flight between any of its constituents. The Institute’s a mosaic, an intermezzo, short-term and close up. We here are
musical nomads, Deleuze’s intellectual warriors expressing, in a modest way, resistance to the miniature state society of institutionalized learning, by declaring and occupying a free and deterritorialized scholarly plateau.

So here’s what I propose. Let’s shed our professional armor and leave our weapons and credentials at the door. Let’s introduce ourselves as people, trust each other, and learn from each other. Let’s roll up our sleeves, toss some ideas around, have a wastebasket handy, and not mind using it. Let’s not get ruffled by being questioned or challenged, or try to impress each other, or pretend we’re always right. Let’s forget about ranks and resumes and just be us. The one quality we need is what Virginia Woolf calls, sincerity of the mind. And the only thing you should hesitate about, is being hesitant.

Now there’re only four ground rules at the Institute. The first is that everyone’s expected to pitch in. You can take a little time to get your juices flowing, but please don’t sit back for four days and soak up other people’s juice like a sponge. Our workshop leaders are facilitators and catalysts, but every single one of you is asked to contribute. The modality of this event is not private enrichment, but social engagement. Polyvocality. We each share the collective responsibility to talk and teach, as well as to listen and learn. So if you came to Chicago hoping to fly under the radar, either because you’re nervous, shy, uncomfortable, unprepared, unacquainted, paranoid, schizophrenic, suicidal, or whatever else may be holding you back from jumping into the fray, kindly leave that strategy at the door. Put on an apron, come on into the kitchen, pick up a spoon, and start stirring the pot like the rest of us. There’s some cookin’ to be done here, and that’s why you’re invited to the party.

The second rule is that any idea is fair game for interrogation. Nothing’s immune from scrutiny or evaluation. So please don’t be so ideologically devoted to some sacred cow, even one you’ve nurtured from a calf, that you’re unwilling to have it appraised at current market value. Let’s not be so enamored with a thought that we can no longer think. We’re not clergy preaching gospel, but inquisitors after truth.

The third rule is that any idea can be tossed into the mix. The Institute works through the cumulative effect of conversation. Its dynamic potential and our best ideas are discovered through an incremental process of trial and error, by thinking and reacting to each other out loud. The premise is Kleist’s, who posited the gradual fabrication of thoughts while speaking, contending that speech itself can create ideas rather than the other way around. If some beliefs are censored, we’re less likely to generate much that’s new. We may not find the philosopher’s stone, but we can hit upon some new discoveries in pursuing it. So let’s stick with the 1st Amendment. Short of crying fire, anything goes.

The last rule engages an ethical standard of sensitivity in all our proceedings, reflecting the collaborative spirit of the Institute itself. Creative communication requires a degree of debate, dialogue, and the agonistic airing of differences. But we must always do this in a mutually respectful way. We uphold a golden rule of discourse, a micro-politics of interaction, that fosters a we-perspective rather than an I-perspective. So doubt wisely, but let’s be mindful of one another, and of the group itself. As this process gradually evolves, we’ll merge into an integrated cognitive whole, a single mind with multiple voices, what Habermas calls a discursive democracy thinking as one.

Now if your guts are as functional as your brains, when flashes of illumination come, insights of mind will be accompanied by intuitions of the heart. Conceptual light bulbs will shine against a deeper, yet more elusive sense of authentic interpersonal exchange, a feeling of engaging in a genuine human event, fulfilling our longing not just for information, but
connection. These are rare peak moments to lie in wait for. It might occur just once, if at all, when you aren’t speaking, in a posture of listening and witnessing.

If you’re lucky and receptive, you may suddenly feel a quiet presence, an aura of intimacy descending upon the room like a ray of light—Rembrandt’s beam—lifting life out of the ordinary. If you’ll permit metaphysics, this is our collective spirit, the ineffable apparition of our sharing something together in our mutual co-presence. Be vigilant of that special moment of sublimity. It will only last a few seconds. I feel it myself, every single year, but have never told a soul. This is the most delicate flower of the Institute, its aesthetic epiphany, and its sweetest reward.

What is the Mannes Institute? It’s both a physical place and a conceptual space. It’s a nursery for reflection, a theatre of interaction, where we think aloud and build camaraderie in a deeper and more meaningful way. It’s a musical think tank, a utopian community of continuing professional education, exchanging the narrative of monologue for the spontaneous give and take of dialogue, and replacing the unidirectional conveyance of distilled information for the multidirectional flow of multifarious ideas in a shared and symmetrical space. The Institute’s an activity of imagination and a test of our trust in one another. It’s an exercise in intellectual fellowship and collegial companionship. It’s an experiment in character and culture, our own Sleepy Hollow, set off in time and space, a perpetual club of sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of our musical village.

Now here’s the caveat: the task before us is rigorous. The Institute is not a stroll in Hyde Park. As you’ve probably gathered, it’s hard work, so buckle up. I’m summoning each of you, like Captain Ahab, to be on deck, front and center, body and soul, at all our events, both professional and social. Be here and be on time. No skipping allowed. Once this is over, you’ll carry away a backpack of ideas, but more importantly, an indelible memory of intellectual intoxication and personal achievement. You’ll have the satisfaction of accomplishing something demanding yet worthwhile, and of having done it with colleagues close by your side. You’ll earn your badges, your pins, and your discharge diplomas—and be proud of them.

At the end, you may hold old doubts about new things, and discover new doubts about old things. You may even feel something has failed us, that together we have fallen short, our mission incomplete, or too much just beginning. Yet if we falter, the size of our attempt is largely to blame. And that, I imagine, is just right. The best we can do on this plateau is to point and inspire. Crossing into Jordan is left for each of us in our own way. As the Talmud instructs, study together, but reflect alone. All true scholarship, says Samuel Johnson, is ultimately the production of an individual mind owing nothing to our colleagues but the contagion of diligence. We may derive thoughts from others, but our way of thinking, the mold in which our thoughts are cast, must always be our own.

Many wonderful qualities are to be found in our profession: intellectual stimulation, tenured positions, leisurely sabbaticals, and academic awards. But connection—true connection—this alone is rare. It can only occur experientially, in life—Erleben—not on some printed page. Authentic connection’s an embodied experience that claims us as whole people, not just as minds. And connecting can only occur in time, and time I’m learning is precious. As some ancient author observed, years are few; books are many.

So let’s be frank with ourselves without being over-dramatic. These next four days are as much about us, about you and me, as they are about our ideas of this, that, or some other thing. This isn’t just a think tank, but a live encounter that engages more than our brains, but our being as well. It’s an existential snapshot of who we are, and what we might become. This has as much
to do with our own anthropology, the aesthetics of ourselves, as it does with our love of music, of knowledge, and of beauty itself.

Welcome to Goodspeed, our port of debarkation. You’ve pilgrimed from afar, bearing the fruits of formidable research, and stand now on the pier about to board. As your Ahab turning ship’s command over to Queequeg and Starbuck, a.k.a. Hoeckner and Rehding, I summon each of you, as Ishmaels, to unfurl your sails, gather our breeze, and leave this slavish shore for the open independence of the sea. Grasp the greater vision of our voyage, seize the moment, and magnify its meaning. Embrace the aesthetics of the Institute itself, our Pequod, and come together as its noble crew. For these next few days on the shores of Lake Michigan, let’s rally round the mast and yoke ourselves more closely to each other, coupled in collegiality, so we may think and feel as one. Only then can we reemerge, each of us reborn, through the fertile conception of a genuine meeting of the minds.

In this great American university, in this great American town, I’ll close by invoking Ahab’s challenge in the great American novel:

I set ye a task. Take these harpoons and lances. Melt them down. Forge me new weapons that will strike deep and hold fast. But do not douse them in water; they must have a proper baptism. What say ye, all ye souls? Will you give as much blood as shall be needed to temper the steel?

Now cast ye off, and catch that whale.

**Banquet Jokes**

I’ve been really sick for the past several months. I almost couldn’t come to the Institute. But I read that most people die in their bed. So I slept on the couch.

Being sick was especially hard on my wife. She finally broke down and said, Wayne, you’re a lazy, indulgent, worthless, messy, fat, grouchy, good for nothin’ loser! Messy?

At one point the doctor called me and said, Mr. Alpern, your check came back. I told him, yeah, well so did my pain!

Then I called the guy back, and said, doctor, I hear ringing in my ear. He yelled, don’t answer it!

**Miles Levin Essay Award**

Each year the Mannes Institute grants an award for an outstanding essay on the topic of the Institute, called the Miles Levin Musical Essay Award. This award is given in honor of Wayne’s nephew, Miles Alpern Levin, an extraordinary young man and brilliant essayist whose life was tragically cut short. Wayne has two daughters, and was very close to Miles as though he were his son. Miles was diagnosed died in 2005 at the age of 17 with an extremely rare pediatric muscle cancer affecting only 350 children a year. The chances of getting this disease are incredibly remote. He died in 2007 a few days before his 19th birthday.

In the two years of his illness, Miles miraculously evolved from a typical teenager to achieve national fame by creating an internet blog that was read by tens of thousands of people all around the world. He described his confrontation with death and his savoring every moment of life with of courage, humor, sensitivity, and grace. He developed an astonishing level of
wisdom and insight far beyond his years, and became an inspirational public figure. Miles’ story was covered in the news media, both in print and on national television. He was interviewed by Anderson Cooper on CNN and Bob Woodruff on ABC. Woodruff, who had suffered injuries in Iraq, became a close personal friend and admirer, and attributed in part his own recovery to the inspiration he received from Miles.

Miles was the recipient of numerous awards and citations, including the prestigious National Sarcoma Foundation Leadership and Courage Award as its youngest recipient. 15,000 people responded to his blog each month from around the world, including Asia, Europe, and South America, from parents struggling with a child’s illness or death, other kids facing death, and healthy admirers. He helping people overcome addiction and depression, and people on the brink of suicide. He gave inspirational strength to numerous patients in hospitals.

Miles was a keen observer of the most minute aspects of reality and evolved into a brilliant writer with wit, charm, and erudition. His wisdom, charisma, and depth of character evolved and intensified as his illness progressed. In the final years of his life, he created paintings, sculptures, and even began composing. A central theme of his writing was that the confrontation with death and adversity could be seized as challenge to expand your heart and mind. On the day of his death, that there were several million hits on his website. Here is a sample of Miles’ writing and thought, remarkably coming from the mind of an eighteen year old, in a way, perhaps, that might invoke Larry’s notion of numinous particles of meaning:

Certain things in this world sing to us a sublime wake up call. We’re constantly searching for them, something real to hold onto and give us the feeling that our lives count for something worthwhile. Whatever this means to us personally, we should not limit where we may expect to find significance or what form it may take. These special experiences, notions, relationships, and phenomena are what we feel as the profound. And when we find it, we know because we can say, now this—this is life.

The goal of the Miles Levin Essay Award is to honor creativity in musical prose and encourage music scholars to write in a manner Miles himself cultivated, a more informal, personal, embodied, and readable style. The essay may relate to the theme of the Institute in any way. It may be metaphorical, philosophical, poetic, humorous, playful, ironic, historical, critical, and/or personal, and must above all engage readers and listeners in a compelling, entertaining, thoughtful, intuitive, sensitive, and provoking manner. This award is not for a scholarly or analytical article similar to those appearing in a professional journal, or even a paper read at a typical academic conference. The style is more literary than academic, more subjective than objective, more observational than informational. It should be nontechnical, conversational, and creative, with an emphasis on wit and imagination, charm and humor, insight and sincerity, sophistication and erudition, oratorical flair, and the belletristic quality of the prose itself.

The Institute is privileged to give the Miles Levin Essay Award to two winners this year, Emily Dolan of the University of Pennsylvania for her essay “The Aesthetic Phoenix,” and Nina Sun Eidsheim of the University of California, Los Angeles, for her essay “On Haikus, Research, Underwater Singing and Listening.”

**Closing Talk**

I stand before you for the last time, members of this august community of scholars,
dedicated to, and now utterly exhausted from, our own mutual enlightenment. As keeper of the flame, about to douse it to end this Olympic event, permit me to ruminate on the hazy origins of our noble enterprise. The truth is, virtually every educational encounter I’ve had, other than this of my own fabrication, was premised upon a vast structural chasm between teacher and student. One talks, the other listens. You don’t need to be Foucault, let alone French, to decipher that inequality.

Given this historical ubiquity of hierarchical learning, is there some ancient precedent for our egalitarian yet paradoxically elite convocation? I mentioned at the outset Rip Van Winkle’s perpetual club of sages, philosophers, and other idle personages of Sleepy Hollow. So I ask, has some legend like this ever existed in music before?

Perhaps the best-known study group in music history was the Florentine Camerata, convening in the castle of Giovanni de Bardi in the late 16th century. Giulio Caccini, one of its distinguished members, reports that the discussion group—let me upgrade it to “workshop”—explored a number of topics, including music, poetry, art, and astrology. The Camerata, as we all know, played a decisive role in articulating the aesthetic principles culminating in the birth of opera.

Bardi’s Camerata, however, was just one star in a galaxy of others, flickering across the skies of Renaissance Europe. The revival of classical learning stimulated a general interest in the idea of learning itself. Plato’s ancient Academy, named after the mythological hero, Academus, was the classical prototype for over 200 scholarly societies in Italy alone. At the core of this movement was the belief that the very act of discussing artistic matters, i.e. estetica, imparted the elevating moral and curative effects of antiquity. 500 years ago, folks like us gathered to discover the legendary benefits of aesthetic inquiry through collaborative discourse and communal debate.

The pioneer in this revival of classical scholarly communities was Marsilio Ficino, a musician who established the first such society, the Académia Platonica or Platonic Academy around 1470. Supported by the Médicis, this Greekish gathering included the most illustrious scholars, musicians, and literati of the day. Similar groups imitated Ficino’s institute on the Italian peninsula and elsewhere, each sporting a hefty manifesto of intellectual objectives and philosophical premises, replete with rigorous criteria for admission and disciplined standards of conduct.

By the 16th century, the concept of an egalitarian body of elite scholars privately convening for the purpose of interactive education was firmly established. These institutes existed entirely apart from the formal hierarchical tradition of the university. Among them were the Academy of Doménico Veniér in Venice, the Académia de la Crusca in Florence, the Vittoria in Verona, the Floridi in Bologna, and the Arcadia in Roma. Competing for the most prominent and learned members—no women of course allowed—these collegial bodies convened on a regular basis to dissect and discuss the aesthetics of music and other objects of communal inquiry.

The Camerata wasn’t the only such think tank to alter the course of music history. Veniér’s institute promoted Bembo’s theories of vernacular literature, influencing the development of the madrigal. The Académia de la Fama in Venice played a significant role in the publication of Zarlino’s treatise, perhaps as his price of admission into the society itself, bestowing instant prestige and readership among the Venetian intellectual elite.

Some of these secret societies had more colorful names creating an enchanting kaleidoscope of intellectual vitality, laying the foundation for our own Chicago Camerata. There
was, for example, the harmoniously consonant Academy of Unison in Perugia, the lofty Academy of Elevati or Elevated Ones in Florence, the mysterious Academia de Incogniti in Venice, and the romantic Academy of Infatuated Ones in Naples.

My personal favorite, a distant forefather of our own clandestine consortium, was the ancient Academy of Alterati, or Altered Ones convening in 16th-century Florence. Key members of the Camerata, including Corsi, Mei, Doni, Rinuccini, and even Bardi himself were also Alterati on the sly. In his manifesto of the Alterati’s objectives, read before each of their meetings, its manicul founder, Giulio del Bene, proclaimed its goal as their “alteration” or transformation into changed collegial beings—*Alterati*—enlightened through the collective pursuit of knowledge.

Their symbol was a vat for pressing wine heaped with grapes, representing the transformative and distilling power of an idea. In pursuit of this aim, the Altered Ones guzzled the intoxicating wine of collaborative thought. Misdemeanors of tardiness and absence were reprimanded by the obligation to deliver an extemporaneous dissertation on some thorny topic of collective concern. Issues of inquiry were invariably ambitious, although the question of sex as a suitable subject of discourse was routinely contested without consummation.

There were luminous discourses of a most numinous nature, prickly debates on the meaning of meaning and the absence of presence, exotic Asiatic experiments in underwater singing and ritual burials of the beautiful. There were even mystical invocations of the Mona Lisa herself, peppered with periodic reports of African sports, all supplemented by needlessly lavish meals, funded through dubious financial transactions that culminated in the eventual imprisonment of its director.

Music was a paramount focus of collective enlightenment, though like our own congregation, professional musicians were entirely absent, as well as the slightest trace of any actual music-making itself. In fact, it was out of pent up desire to hear some [quote] “real music” that Bardi and brethren skipped out of these tediously abstract seminars to hang out at the local Camerata.

The best thing about the Alterati, however, was that everyone had a nickname or pseudonym—something we’ve mercifully decided to suspend in our own proceedings. Bardi, for instance, was called il Puro, or the Pure One, Girólamo Mei was il Pianigiano or the Steady One, Rinuccini was known as the Bold One, and del Bene himself was known as the Desirous One.

But my favorite were those members whose real appellations are no longer known, the boys in the back, Derrida’s forgotten others, tagging along in the back row of history, guys like the Tender One, the Silent One, the Dismembered One, even the Horrid One. And finally, as apparently in all academia, both now, then, and no doubt back to antiquity as well, there was—as there are here—the Late One, the Dubious One, and best of all, the Drowsy One.

That would be me.

**Members**

Berthold Hoeckner (co-chair) Alex Rehding (co-chair) Daniel Chua Fred Maus Susan McClary Steve Rings Martin Scherzinger Larry Kramer (guest)

Opening Speech

Welcome to the tenth anniversary celebration of the Mannes Institute. That’s right — a decade of this. Actually, this is the eleventh Institute, celebrating the ten before it. Hundreds of scholars from around the world have participated in this special event. If you’re here today, it’s because you’re the cream of the crop. This is the combined faculty of the Mannes Institute over the past ten years. Each one of you created, organized, and conducted a workshop of your own. Each of you knows just how challenging it was, and how rewarding it was.

I’m going to begin by calling off the first names of all the people here in chronological order of the particular Institute you worked on and ask that you please stand up briefly. Remain standing while your entire group is being announced, and then sit down for the next group. Where there’s more than one person with the same first name — there’re a couple of Bills, Bobs, Davids, Johns, and Henrys — I’ll leave it up to you to know what you did and not take credit for someone else. Let’s hold our collective applause till the end.

- History of Theory: Thomas, Joel, Sarah, and Cristle;
- Schenkerian Analysis: Bill, Frank, Matthew, and Nick;
- Transformation: Joe, Rick, Ed, Henry, Bob, and John;
- Form: Bill, Janet, Jonathan, Scott, and Bob;
- Rhythm: Justin, Harald, Kofi, and Chris;
- Chromaticism: Pat, Dan, David, Richard, Charles, and Deborah;
- Schoenberg: Andy, Severine, and Michael; Ethan will be here tomorrow;
- Jazz and Pop: Henry, John, and Cynthia;
- Cognition: Larry, Betsy, and Bob;
- Aesthetics: Berthold, Alex, Steve, Fred, and Susan.

Now let’s give all your colleagues a round of applause.
Over these past ten years, I’ve had the privilege of working closely with every single one of you individually, getting to know you better, learn from you, and share my vision of something different with each of you. I’ve lived at the hub of an astonishing network of collegiality and creativity. I know of no one in our field who has had such an incredible opportunity. I’ve become friends with virtually everyone in our field. Collectively we’ve set the standard for collaborative learning, critical discourse, and collegial participation. We’ve probed each other’s minds and challenged our own. We’ve puzzled and pushed, prodded and persevered. And together we created something that didn’t exist before. We created a community and a new way of interacting.

The Institute’s a time and a place where we give each other permission to think out loud, pose questions, postulate answers, and above all, trust each other with our own imaginations. We’ve forged a mode of noncompetitive exchange based upon shared vulnerability and mutual affirmation. We’ve allowed ourselves to be students again, by teaching each other and making what we do more personal. Beyond any musical knowledge we’ve acquired along the way — and that we’ve certainly done — it’s the process of the Institute itself that for me is our greatest achievement and the legacy of this enterprise as we celebrate ten years together. Together we’ve carved out an oasis, a communal watering hole within the increasingly arid institutionalization of our academic lives. We’re here to authenticate, validate, rejuvenate, and resuscitate. Our goal is to judge our thoughts, but affirm each other. We respond to ideas critically, but to one another positively. We seek above all to humanize our work and our community, and thereby reconnect with ourselves.

Over the past decade, our topics have covered the musical waterfront, with seven home games here at Mannes, and three on the road at Yale, Eastman, and Chicago. This year, however, is different by design. Our agenda over the next two days cuts across the borders and boundaries of the separate topics you each represent. We know from the outset that what we’ll do here lacks the time and concentration to be truly satisfactory in any scholarly sense. This time we’ll deliberately meditate too much and analyze too little. We’re flying higher and coming in for a softer landing. We’ll forfeit the depth and intensity of our prior efforts, and leave too much to the imagination to connect the dots. We’ll spread ourselves lightly in the ether of speculation, so our focus blurs and loses itself in the breeze. If we accomplish anything at all, we’ll do a greater service through unfettered rumination more than any actual achievement of its own.

But in the course of this process, I believe we’ll fulfill a larger purpose. These very deficiencies in clarity and precision will yield a truer representation of the state of our discipline, and of music itself. If our view of music always comes in tidy packages and logical arrangements, aren’t we drawing a veil over the inherent disorder of art and of all human affairs? What value is a theory of music that imagines its hills must be higher and its scenery sharper than they are in the rest of our lives, masking the unruliness of the world itself?

For these few next days in the decades of our work, let’s pause like hummingbirds in mid air, suspending our endless discrimination of detail, our constant categorization and calibration, and our relentless quest for technique. For these 30 hours or so, let hard facts become soft in our hands, like clay at the potter’s wheel. Let’s release ourselves from the desire to delve deeper, and for a moment gaze wider and farther instead. Let’s render our fluctuating states of mind with broader strokes, without trying to particularize their features or the precise way we might experience them. If no detail is accurately drawn, a sense of the whole may begin to emerge.

Let a series of images, disjointed and incomplete, float by like a congregation of clouds, gently joining, and slowly dispersing as reflections of our transient thoughts. Let’s wander into
precincts that are more difficult to approach and more amorphous to grasp, because they are less
defined and less travelled. Let’s set aside our analytic picks and pails, and resist our temptation
to dig deeper holes. We’ve explored so many musical mineshafts together over the past ten
years, can’t we just breath the warm air on top this time?

For once let’s enjoy the luxury not to be exact. Let’s dismiss the need to drive home some
winning point, thrust the tip of some scholarly sword, or parade the glitter of an academic
triomph. Let’s divulge our doubts and dimmest instincts, passing from one comment to another
like food at a picnic, without unloading our cargo in perfect order. Let’s speak more from
curiosity than certainty, and not insist we’re always right. Let’s grant each other the license to
loiter and to browse without always having to buy. Let’s ply the aesthetics of the unfinished. All
of these shifting scenes and memories over the next few days will compose nothing less than our
own collective autobiography, a communal sketchpad of who we are, what we do, and what we
might become, without trying to force or shape it.

Now you might ask, what then will we learn about music? About musical facts, scarcely
anything at all. We may only tell ourselves what we already know, chosen perhaps for the sake
of some adventitious quality — like it fits into a conversation here, or might be the right piece
there — and not necessarily for any intrinsic value or significance of its own. But by letting go
rather than grasping more, there will grow upon us a greater sense of intimacy with our work,
and with each other. Any inadequacies we may feel along the way are merely our own, a
frustration with our own fragmentation, and our inability to explain what we feel, or know what
we want to know most. But these aren’t inadequacies, they’re virtues. Our sense of incompleion,
this longing for more, is precisely what prods us to continue and keep looking. And that’s what
drives music theory itself, and caused it to evolve through times of similar meditation set aside
just like this by our predecessors since the days of old.

For all other times, when we disperse and re-enter the world, we can be more self-
possessed, more composed, and better disciplined. We surely need that to do our work. But we
don’t need it to reflect upon it. To sit close with our neighbor, cloistered in contemplation, hand
to hand, jowl to jowl, is perhaps too intimate among colleagues, even of art. But draw a little
apart, see people as people, adversaries as companions, rivals as friends, and they become
valuable and full of interest. Then it’s not our words that matter, or the mental profit we may
thereby glean, but rather the unspoken reverberations we make as we meet, and the resonance we
feel inside as we move and think together.

These are more precious gifts we can give to each other. They’re often found far away, in
rare moments and exotic places, buried and strangely transformed. Like sirens ashore, they sing
to us a subliminal song, something to hold onto that tells us our lives, our work, and our
connections with each other all count for something worthwhile. They sing a song of hope, and
even courage. By listening quietly and carefully to these silent echoes inside, allowing them to
modulate our customary modes of thought, slightly shifting the value and meaning of familiar
things, we arrive at a truer nature of experience, of each other, and of ourselves.

And it’s this, this communal alchemy we can work upon each other together, that makes
me wonder whether that unsettled sea into which we sail, is either so limited or unfathomable as
its critics suggest. Those of us here, about to embark, might ask ourselves whether through these
dappled waves, shot between wind and water, we might not hear the distant voice of some fuller
and finer truth than may otherwise be our aim, by choosing the rainbow over the granite, tacking
into the breeze, and sailing like Ulysses, listening, lashed to the mast, into those shadowier
regions of music, and the ebb tides of our own mind.
City Island and Hart Island

City Island is one of 70 islands in the New York Archipelago that includes Manhattan, Long Island, and Ellis Island. Lying just off the Bronx coast, it was first settled by the Dutch in 1614 and originally called Minifer's Island. It was renamed New City Island in 1761 with the idea of competing with New York City. When that didn't quite work out, people dropped the ambitious “New” and just went with City Island. Despite its proximity to the largest metropolis in the western hemisphere, City Island retains the ambience of a quaint fishing village. Unknown even to many New Yorkers, the contrast is stark. The most famous restaurant on the island is Sammy’s Fishbox, a veritable cornucopia of edible species of the sea available for human consumption in mass quantities, with the possible exception of plankton. It’s almost impossible to leave Sammy’s hungry, unless you’re a whale.

A stone's throw from City Island lies Hart Island, its even lesser known and more mysterious alter ego. Hart is the Middle English word for stag. According to Indian mythology, the island was occupied by a lone deer, shot by a hunter from a passing canoe, and remains haunted by its spirit. And haunted it is. Throughout its dark history, Hart Island has been home to an insane asylum for female lunatics, a macabre workhouse, a tuberculosis hospital, a Civil War prison for Confederate soldiers, an isolation camp for yellow fever victims, a reformatory for male delinquents, and a Nike missile base.

Above all, Hart Island is the site of New York’s infamous “Potter's Field,” the largest and densest public graveyard on the planet. This is a gruesome mass cemetery where unidentified and unclaimed bodies and body parts have been buried since the Civil War to the present. More than a million dead are buried there, half of them children.

New York is the only major American city to maintain a separate public burial ground for the unwanted dead. Hart Island represents the ultimate melting pot, a place where individual lives are blended hopelessly beyond recognition. The name “Potter’s Field” comes from the Gospel of St. Matthew, designating a place for the burial of strangers, purchased by the priests with the bribe money recovered from Judas in his betrayal of Christ. If anything qualifies as Rachmaninoff’s Isle of the Dead, this is it. The place is just plain spooky. We’ll be able to see Hart Island offshore, but we won’t be going, let alone eating there — or anything from there.

Jokes

When I switched careers from law to music, I never thought my greatest professional achievement would have something to do with a bus.

I’m the Ralph Cramden of music theory.

Essay Award Presentation

The Institute’s Musical Essay Award honors an outstanding personal essay on the topic of the Institute by one of its members. The winner receives a cash prize and presents the essay as a speech in a plenary session. This honor is given in memory of my nephew, Miles Alpern Levin, an extraordinary young man whose life was cut tragically short. The purpose of this award is to encourage music scholars to express themselves in a more literary and informal way than that of
conventional academic discourse. The essay may be poetic or philosophical, humorous or historical, but above all must engage listeners in a compelling and thoughtful way. This is a personal essay, not a professional one. The models are Montaigne and Woolf, Lamb not Lewin, Bacon not Babbitt.

Miles Levin died at the age of 19 from a rare form of pediatric cancer called Rhabdomyosarcoma, which kills only 350 kids a year. The chances of getting it are extremely remote. In the two years of his illness, Miles developed an astonishing level of wisdom and insight beyond his years, and became an inspirational public figure. He described his struggle with courage, humor, and imagination on an internet blog reaching tens of thousands of people around the globe. 15,000 people responded to his blog each month, from North and South America, Europe and Asia, including parents struggling with a child’s suffering, other young people facing death, and many healthy admirers. He gave strength to numerous patients in hospitals, helped others overcome addiction and depression, and even pulled some from the brink of suicide.

Miles was the recipient of several honor and awards, including the prestigious Sarcoma Foundation of America Leadership in Courage Award as its youngest recipient ever. His remarkable story was covered in print and on television. He was interviewed by Anderson Cooper on CNN and Bob Woodruff on ABC. Woodruff, who had suffered injuries in Iraq, became a close friend and admirer, attributing his own recovery in part to the inspiration he received from Miles. On the day of his death, CNN reported over a half million hits on his website. In two short years, this remarkable young man reached more readers than any scholar in our field during our entire careers — and most likely all of us put together.

Miles’ wisdom and charisma intensified as his illness progressed. He seized his fate as an opportunity to teach thousands how to live with courage, and how to die with grace. He evolved into a brilliant writer of considerable charm and insight. One of his pieces is a short essay titled “Manley the Digger.” It’s a poignant little tale about what Miles calls “the art of digging.” We’re going to read it today, not only because this award is in his honor, but because digging, the art of digging, has something to do with what we do too. We’re somehow not satisfied just listening to music. We’re driven to dig holes in it and see what we find buried underneath. We want to roll up our sleeves and rub our hands in the soil of music. It’s only when we get dirty with notes that we truly feel them, and feel we’ve come to know them. And we have faith that if we just keep digging deep enough, we’ll find something for sure.

Miles describes this love of digging in more poetic terms in his little yarn about Manley the Digger. As we’ll see with our own essay winner, he starts out with a tidbit of information on the surface — a single sentence from a small town newspaper the rest of us wouldn’t even notice — and digs up an entire world. It’s this uncanny ability to find creativity in the commonplace, insight in insignificance, that’s Miles’ link to our finest essayists like Lamb and Woolf, and our most astute analysts like Babbitt and Lewin. These are our best diggers, masters of the art of digging, who excavate the extraordinary beneath the ordinary, and in Miles’ case, find meaning in the face of death.

**MANLEY THE DIGGER**

by Miles Levin

Notice from the *Ypsilanti Courier*, April 18, 2006, Section B, page 9:

*Manley Gilbert has purchased the former Lettie Bailey house and is drilling a well.*
Manley Gilbert has purchased the former Lettie Bailey house and is drilling a well. Ever since childhood, he had a passion for digging. At age five, he made his first attempt to dig to China. By age nine he was digging holes that were deeper than he was tall.

Everybody tries to dig a hole to China at some point in their childhood, but most give up after twenty minutes when mom comes out with a cool glass of lemonade. Not Manley. He couldn’t explain why he liked to dig so much or what in his life he was trying to tunnel away from, but every time he felt upset or scared, he would go hide in one of his burrows. It gave him an inexplicable feeling of safety sitting there alone, surrounded only by dark, damp earth.

Where most would feel claustrophobic, Manley felt enveloped and protected. The dirt walls around him were thousands of miles thick; he was embedded in the planet’s crust, which formed a continuous barrier of earth-wall, spanning out in all directions until it reached the nearest bodies of water.

Years later in high school, when everyone else was saving money to buy their first car, Manley was saving up for a jackhammer. To no one’s surprise, he went on to become a construction worker, installing new sewage tunnels in areas of urban development. And now, at the age of 38, he was moving into the Lettie Bailey house with his wife, Tracy. She was a geologist.

They moved in on one of the first truly bitter days of winter. Tracy immediately rushed into the house, cold and excited to see their new home. But Manley stayed outside, surveying the front lawn. He was studying the landscape for the best digging spots. The ground was semi-frozen: abysmal digging conditions. He would have to wait until spring before he could break ground.

Tracy motioned from the front window for Manley to come in. He obliged. It was her birthday today. He had given her a birthday card that morning, and on the inside had written, “I dig you.” He wrote the same thing every year.

The new house was small and cramped, but Manley didn’t care. All that mattered to him was the underground stream that ran approximately fifty feet below their house. He wanted to dig until he reached water. Nothing inspired greater passion in Manley than digging, but water fascinated him as well. It was why he worked with sewage pipes, a professional fusion of his two favorite elements, earth and water.

Flowing water yields and conforms around solid objects, but over time even the strongest steel can be rusted away, the hardest stone carved out. A river created the Grand Canyon over millions of years. This gave Manley great inspiration and taught him the patience required by the art of digging. He planned to dig (just him and his shovel, no power tools) until he reached that water fifty feet down. It would be the ultimate challenge of his digging career and what he would consider years later to be the best moments of his life.

* * *

This year’s winner of the Miles Levin Essay Award is Michael Cherlin, for his essay titled, “Think Lamb Not Lewin, Bacon Not Babbitt,” taken from the call for papers. Congratulations, Mike. Come on up and read us your wonderful essay.
Closing Dialogue
(with Susan McClary)

I.

S: All right, Wayne, so what can you tell us about the Institute after ten years?
W: What would you like to know?
S: Why did you create it?
W: I’m not exactly sure.
S: Well, take a guess.
W: The opportunity to do something different came along.
S: Why did you keep on doing it year after year?
W: It evidently filled a need, perhaps even a necessity among people I know.
S: Did you ever imagine the Institute would be this successful?
W: Morton Feldman once said you’re lucky if you have one good idea in your whole life. I guess this was mine.
S: The Institute has changed the way we interact.
W: That was the intention.
S: Your idea of a participatory, interactive workshop was a pedagogical breakthrough that’s been extensively copied.
W: I unfortunately couldn’t copyright it. If I had a nickel for every workshop music scholars conduct I’d be rich.
S: What inspired the Institute’s unique format?
W: Some past accumulation of law and theology, applied to music.
S: You’re a student of law and theology?
W: I studied law at Yale and Wall Street, and theology at Harvard and the lower East Side.
S: What’s their connection to the Institute?
W: I applied modes of jurisprudential and theological inquiry to music.
S: How so?
W: The law and the Talmud are both studied through an inquisitorial method predicated upon a fundamental act of contesting an initial assertion. They both involve intellectual sparring, haggling back and forth, requiring two or more people. It’s like chess; you can’t do it alone.
S: You mean arguing?
W: Yes. As soon as you say something, anything, I’ll automatically challenge it. In law it’s called the Socratic method; in Talmudic exegesis it used to be called pilpul, meaning spice or pepper, i.e. sharp, almost hairsplitting debate and analysis.
S: Music theorists are hair-splitters and note crunchers, aren’t we?
W: There’s a lot of similarity, but music scholars usually do it alone. That’s why our conferences are monologues. In law, every case by definition has two sides, where one says yea and the other says nay. Unlike music theorists, lawyers are trained to argue both sides. I once won a case based on the contested interpretation of a comma.
S: This why people don’t like lawyers.
W: Schenker studied law.
S: You’ve made my case.
W: To me that’s a virtue, perhaps a necessity.
S: And all this is based on what?
W: The desire to know, and the wisdom to doubt.
S: For what end?
W: The value of inquiry itself.

II.

S: What temperaments does the Institute represent?
W: The humanistic, the artistic, and the scientific.
S: How does it work?
W: The Institute is an experiment in intellectual democracy. It’s a gathering of equals that oscillates between rambling and rigor.
S: By what methodology?
S: So Montaigne’s your guiding spirit?
W: He’s one of them.
S: Who else?
S: No musicians?
W: Bach — and maybe Schenker. I like his relentless sense of inquiry, though too often he provides his own answers.
S: Anybody else?
W: My father.
S: What did he teach you?
W: To question everything.
S: Sounds unsettling.
W: It is, he was, and I am. I’m as doubtful of myself as I am of everything else. Montaigne again. In that sense, the Institute’s autobiographical.
S: That’s it?
W: Well, also George Carlin.
S: Carlin . . . the comedian?
W: Yeah. He said, “I think, therefore I am, I think.”
S: OK, Rene, I think we get the message. So what’s up with the different logos?
W: First it was a unicorn with the inscription, Loyalty to All. Then I changed it to Leonardo’s Vitruvian Man to capture the spirit of inquiry.
S: How about the M on the baseball cap?
W: It’s the symbol of the Kiev metro system. I’ve never been there. I hope the Ukrainians don’t mind.
S: Any other logos?
W: My latest is the hummingbird.
S: Why the hummingbird?
W: I like the idea of hovering in mid air, deliberately prolonging a state of indecision, ambiguity, and suspended judgment. That’s in Montaigne too by the way, but I got the idea from Morton Feldman. You can hear it in his music, where time is slowed down to the critical point of oscillation between two tiny sounds or motives. Feldman got it from Kierkegaard’s Either/Or, but adapted it via Samuel Beckett to get Neither.
S: How about your motto?
W: At the beginning it was Deliberate with Coolness, Analyze with Criticism, Reflect with Candor, and Evaluate with Conviction. The first three phrases come from an article published under the pseudonym Cato during the Constitutional debate of 1787. I added the last phrase to create the acronym DARE. I consider the Institute daring.
S: So what happened to that?
W: A few years later I saw a gigantic Apple billboard across from the Louvre that said “Think Different,” so I changed mine to “Think Together.” That’s catchier.

III.

S: To whom does the idea of the Institute appeal?
W: The seekers of truth.
S: Who does it offend?
W: The purveyors of truth.
S: Who does it not concern?
W: Everyone else.
S: What personal characteristic of yours, if any, does the Institute manifest?
W: A proclivity to acquire knowledge of all kinds, yet not enough of any single kind.
S: Anything else?
W: Some claim I possess a soul of opposition, a paradox-monger vexed with a skeptical spirit, arising perhaps from my breeding as a barrister more than any innate contentiousness of my own.
S: Do you agree?
W: At times I’m a zealot of my own dichotomous religion.
S: So do you simultaneously refute that now as well?
W: I recall the epitaph of William of Ockham: But now he’s dead, as plainly does appear, yet would deny it, were he living here.
S: How did your contrarian disposition influence the Institute?
W: I designed the enterprise as a courtroom for the adjudication of musical controversies through the trial of polarities, presentation of opposing evidence, and cross-examination of scholarly witnesses before an impartial jury of peers.
S: So the Institute’s about finding the truth?
W: By subjecting competing claims to adversarial interrogation, we may begin to approach something resembling a provisional truth. That’s the genius of Anglo-American law. It offered a two-edged sword that cuts on both sides, rather than a single blade wielded by one, blinded by his own opinion.
S: Is that why you’re doing this now as an interrogation rather than a speech, a Platonic dialogue instead of a soliloquy?
W: Not really. I got this idea from the Q & A near the end of Joyce’s Ulysses.
S: How’s that?
W: Recently a young colleague told me I perform a feminine function for our profession by offering a safe haven where more masculine academic warriors like yourselves can feel affirmed and rejuvenated for scholarly battle.
S: How’d that go down?
W: At first I was offended. I actually view the Institute in a more aggressive and radically political way, with me as an academic agitator and community organizer, a sort of musical Ché Guevara advocating communal learning, intellectual socialism, and Marxist humanism in revolt against impersonal, atomistic, and capitalist driven scholarship. It grows out of my ideological experience during the sixties at Oberlin.

S: Intriguing. Tell us more.

W: The Institute’s defined by a negative dialectic, specifically its antipathy to the oppressive conventions of academia, and the alienation, apathy, and anomie they engender. Its vision is more intimate, its message more ethical, and its mission more political. The Institute rejects the institutionalization of pedagogy and the competitive individualization of knowledge that dampen our spirit, cloud our camaraderie, and mask true learning.

S: What have you been reading?

W: We disavow, with Baudrillard, the simulacra of academia and its simulation of scholarship. We denounce, with Foucault, the academy’s petty fussiness and bureaucratic overregulation as internalized means of discipline and control. We decry, with Marx, the encroaching capitalization of thought, and the mass production of credentials. We’re determined, with Nietzsche, to rattle the cages of outmoded customs and oppressive conventions. And we shake a clenched fist at the Palinization of educational standards and professional protocols.

S: Wow, that’s heady stuff. And to think I assumed we were just studying music.

W: We are studying music, but not just music. The medium is also the message.

IV.

W: May I continue?

S: There’s more?

W: I’d like to bring in Deleuze and geometry for a minute.

S: I guess they’re both chic these days, so be my guest.

W: In the language of Deleuze, the Institute unfolds a smooth space of discourse, where thoughts and voices are free to come and go, in contrast to the striated and partitioned grid of higher education. The round configuration of our workshops replaces the linear confrontation between teacher and students with the interactive geometry of the circle, demoting a centralized perspective, and subordinating the point to the vector. Just as any coordinate within a circle can connect with any other, so may any person within our sphere traverse the diagonal to converse with another. There’s no privileged place of position. In the curvature of our space we are always in the midst of ourselves. We don’t strive for the consistency of hierarchical order, but the rhizomatic equalization of a patchwork quilt, a decentered constellation, facilitating creative lines of flight between any of its constituents.

S: You sure toss around a lot of big words. Finished?

W: Almost. Just to bring this full circle: We here are a cadre of note-crunching nomads, intellectual warriors cultivating collective resistance to the musical microstate of institutionalized learning, by declaring and occupying a free scholarly plateau. That free zone, that small green patch we’ve cleared and claim together, is the Mannes Institute.

S: Aha! So there’s a manifesto after all!

W: Not really. I’m just riffing here. I learned most of that gobblety-gook from Martin Scherzinger. He’s off playing rugby somewhere in Scotland.

S: Whatever. So what’s all that stuff got to do with Joyce’s Ulysses?
W: Well, when I dropped my knee jerk macho reaction and reconsidered my colleague’s idea about the more affirmative, feminine side of the Institute’s radicalism, I began to feel like Molly (Penelope), offering a safe harbor for Bloom (Ulysses), the man of many twists and turns. I’m Molly to all of your Blooms, and my role here is to help you blossom. I wanted to recite Molly’s incredible soliloquy at the end of the book (if anyone gets that far), lines like “What kind of flowers are those they invented like the stars,” or “I wouldn’t give a snap of my two fingers for all that learning,” and climax of course, with “Yes I said, yes, I will, yes.” But it all seemed a bit too intimate and personal for this crowd, and no one would probably get what I meant any more than they did Joyce. So I chucked it and went with the Q & A in the chapter before instead.

S: Well that explains that!

V.

W: Well, when I dropped my knee jerk macho reaction and reconsidered my colleague’s idea about the more affirmative, feminine side of the Institute’s radicalism, I began to feel like Molly (Penelope), offering a safe harbor for Bloom (Ulysses), the man of many twists and turns. I’m Molly to all of your Blooms, and my role here is to help you blossom. I wanted to recite Molly’s incredible soliloquy at the end of the book (if anyone gets that far), lines like “What kind of flowers are those they invented like the stars,” or “I wouldn’t give a snap of my two fingers for all that learning,” and climax of course, with “Yes I said, yes, I will, yes.” But it all seemed a bit too intimate and personal for this crowd, and no one would probably get what I meant any more than they did Joyce. So I chucked it and went with the Q & A in the chapter before instead.

S: Well that explains that!

V.

W: I figured you’d ask that.

S: Why, are you psychic?

W: No, I wrote the script.

S: I think it’s too long.

W: I tried but I couldn’t make it any shorter.

S: Never mind. Stop wasting time. So who paid for all this?

W: Me.

S: You’re the anonymous donor?

W: I paid for it myself.

S: Out of your own pocket?

W: Well, I can’t patch my pantry or buy a burrito with this money, but I can spend it on

you.

S: How much have you spent on us after ten years of the Institute?

W: Somewhere north of a third of a million dollars, give or take a few miles.

S: That’s unbelievable. Why did you keep this a secret for so long?

W: To protect myself.

S: From who?

W: You.

S: Against what?

W: From the misperception of me as someone I’m not. I was suspect as an outsider to begin with.

S: So then why have you just disclosed it?

W: Because I no longer want or need that protection. I want you to know. Maybe I should drop the pretense and call it the Alpern Institute?

S: But what about Mannes?

W: Mannes was the cradle for the Institute’s birth. For that I’m deeply grateful, but I’m the stork. Our relationship has been a complex one of mutual benefit, with ups and downs, but in general it’s rather remarkable that a conservatory rather than an academic university has spawned something this scholarly.

S: Your Institute has placed it smack in the center of the scholarly map. Mannes has become the Mecca of advanced musical scholarship.

W: Perhaps “restored” Mannes to the center of the scholarly map might be more accurate. Although Mannes is first and foremost a conservatory focused upon performance, it
has a long and venerable history of scholarship of its own. Mannes’ uniqueness has always been its synthesis of theory with practice. A Zen monk once told me years ago that the key to music is a happy marriage of the head with the hand and the heart. I believe that — that we need all three — a musical ménage a trois.

S: So do I, Lois. So do I.

VI.

S: What aspect of the Institute do you enjoy most?
W: Its fluctuating incertitude. I like incongruities of judgment, and the give and take of opposing ideas. I’m often more interested in the shape of a statement than its substance, its manner more than its meaning, and its presentation over its point. I dwell upon cadence as much as content, and attend as closely to style as significance. I value rhetorical and spatial design. Oddities of speech intrigue me most.

S: What aspect of the Institute do you enjoy least?
W: Its simultaneous arousal of interest and indifference, conviction and disbelief. Without discipline, skepticism devolves into cynicism.

S: Anything else?
W: Virginia Woolf wrote in one of her essays that there are times when great art is too beautiful and universal to speak to the solitude of our own particular case. That’s an astonishing and even blasphemous idea. On occasion I feel that sense of isolation at the Institute. What’s all this got to do with me, anyway?

S: What issue, as much as any, if not more than any other, frequently engaged your mind?
W: The mode of interaction itself.
S: Meaning what?
W: The Institute’s a conversation, like this. There’s an old Chinese proverb that says tell me and I’ll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I’ll understand. There’s another that says a single conversation across the table with a wise person is worth a month’s study of books.

S: Explanation please, Confucius.
W: I see us as constant students engaged in a discourse of toleration, a debate of pluralities based upon mutual affirmation, where suppression of ideas is intolerable, and imagination reigns supreme.

S: What have you discovered after ten years of doing this?
W: I’ve learned that the most precious things in life are ephemeral, just like music.
S: How’s that?
W: Our encounters at the Institute are transient. That’s why they’re so precious: they live and die within a single moment. We experience a euphoric glimpse of ego evaporation and of actually thinking together, of contemplation as one. We sense a love-like union with others beyond our individual selves, a transcendence of our own isolation by merging into a larger body to which we belong. But we can’t hold on to this aura of intimacy. It’s a living experience in real time: here one moment, gone the next, just like music. The best things in life are like this: you can’t really capture them without cutting off their head. The only way to keep a butterfly is to kill it. But then you don’t have a real butterfly. The only way to love someone is to keep loving them.
S: Is this what you actually think about during these workshops?
W: At times, yes. Camus said an intellectual is someone whose mind watches itself.
S: So by this standard was the decade of the Institute a success?
W: Yes and no. On a musical and scholarly level, yes. On a moral and political level, not really.
S: How yes?
W: We engaged in collaborative learning.
S: But what did we learn?
W: We learned how to think together about something we care about, and how many can become one. If you were receptive, you may have sensed our collective spirit, the sharing of something together in our mutual co-presence through the alchemy of union. This is the flower of the Institute, its epiphany and sweetest reward.
S: But we never settled anything.
W: I forget who said it’s better to debate a question without settling it, than to settle a question without debating it.
S: That’s debatable.
W: Well there you go.

VII.

S: So how did the Institute fail on moral and political grounds?
W: We were unable to really change our profession and how we treat each other beyond our discrete experience together. The event exists in a bubble or vacuum outside of ordinary time and space, like a sort of secular ritual. That’s what gives it its magic, and its heightened sense of significance. But its capacity to affect us more deeply, its efficacy in the world beyond its own unique dimension, is limited, and we fell short, as magic always does.
S: But haven’t you achieved something personally?
W: Melville said I try everything; I achieve what I can. And he wrote the great American novel. I just set up a few workshops and I didn’t even run those. I guided the ship, but you were the crew. I’m Captain Ahab, pacing the deck alone at night, chasing a whale.
S: But what about that SMT Lifetime Award, and all those glowing testimonials you exacted from us each year?
W: Memories and trophies. Harpoons and scars. Echoes of past actions to sit on a shelf. If I’ve accomplished anything at all, I’ve enlarged the experience of others more than any actual achievement I myself am entitled to claim. The real work of the Institute was done by brains more inventive than my own. I’m obliged to each of you alone, and all of you together. My gratitude is the gold by which I discharge these debts.
S: So dare I ask your verdict on the state of the discipline?
W: Well, I guess I might be a little disappointed, but only because I’m so idealistic. Perhaps that’s what it takes to do something like this in the first place. We glimpsed the white whale, but we just couldn’t catch it. So maybe that’s the lesson of the Institute: go fish.
S: Have we let you down?
W: Put it this way: our horizon was big. If we faltered, the size of our attempt was largely to blame. We’re not going home empty handed, but it’s the whale that won.

VIII.
S: So what’s next for you?
W: Going back to Cali — I mean New Bedford.
S: Actually I think it was Nantucket.
W: They’re the same place.
S: Are you tired of the Institute after ten years?
W: Well, I find I keep getting to the office later. But I make up for it by leaving earlier. That’s Charles Lamb.
S: But don’t you enjoy being in the spotlight?
W: It’s getting to the point where I’m no fun anymore. Let’s all say 49 byes and sail away on wooden ships.
S: Crosby, Stills, and Nash?
S: Simon and Garfunkel.
W: James Fenimore Cooper.
S: Meaning what?
W: I don’t know. Maybe someday I’ll set sail in a different direction, younger sailors, an uncharted sea, faster ship, slower fish. Perhaps a more hospitable port. For now I’m heading back to Ithaca. Penelope waits, the long day wanes. ‘Tis not to late to seek a newer world.
S: But what about us?
W: What about you?
S: Well, aren’t we your crew?
W: You are the souls that have toiled, and wrought and thought with me, far on the ringing plains of windy Troy. Tennyson, Ulysses.
S: Watch it, Quee Quay! I know my Tennyson and Iliad to boot. “Still there is the rolling wine dark sea!” “Though much is taken, much abides!” “To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield!” “The sirens sing!”
W: Then strap me to the mast of a ship with no name. We’ve drunk the delight of battle with our peers. We slew the noble Hector and swam in the wake of the great white shark. Sing, O Goddess, the rage of Ishmael. Truth hath no confines!
S: Hold on! This is getting seriously screwed up. Deleuze, LL Cool J, Feldman, Scherzinger, Tennyson . . . and now you call me Ishmael?
W: Cling to my coffin.
S: What? Remind me: what’s this white whale we’re supposed to be looking for? What’s that got to do with music? And who cares about all this anyway without you stomping around all peg-legged on the Pequod?
W: Well, it’s the . . .
S: By the way, is it really a whale, or just a big fish?
W: It’s the force that through the green fuse drives the flower and blasts the roots of trees.
S: So what’s that supposed to be now . . . Bob Dylan? You’ve lost me, Jonah! Is this a portrait of an artist or a young dog?
W: Well, it’s the force . . .
S: Never mind, Thomas, I can’t understand your Whalish accent anyways.
W: Then rage against the dying of the light, but don’t go gentle into that good night.
S: Stop. You’re drifting without an anchor. So what are you going to do if the Institute’s kaput? You ain’t got nothing else. You’re all washed up. You’re a one-trick pony, madam.

W: I’ll do exactly what I did before.
S: Yeah, what’s that, Rodin?
W: Think alone.
S: Alone? Great! So what happens to think together?
W: I stumbled on a corollary in the Talmud. Pirke Avot says study together, but reflect alone.

S: Pirke what?
W: The Sayings of the Fathers.
S: Whose fathers?
W: All true scholarship is ultimately the production of an individual mind, owing nothing to our colleagues but the contagion of diligence. Samuel Johnson. Maybe I’ll engage in what he called the invisible occupation of authorship just like the rest of you.
S: Hey, wait a minute! Dr. Johnson lived in the 18th century for God’s sake! That makes him irrelevant. And didn’t he have gout or something awful like that? This doesn’t sound too Institutish after ten years of your togetherness drill.
W: What kind of flowers are those?
S: What? You’re a quitter! A pied piper! Heretic! Shabbtai Tzvi!
W: What kind of flowers are those we’ve invented like the stars?
S: What stars?
W: I wouldn’t give a snap of my two fingers for all that learning.
S: All what learning?
W: Yes I said . . .
S: What are you blubbering about, Ayrab?
W: Yes . . . I will . . . . yes.
S: Huh?
[silence]
S: Hello?
[silence]
S: Earth to Wayne’s World . . . come in, please . . .
[silence]
S: Molly?
[silence]
S: Ché?
[longer silence]
S: What the hell?
[silence]

Diploma Ceremony

2001 HISTORY OF THEORY
Co-Chairs: Thomas Christensen and Joel Lester
Faculty: Sarah Fuller, Cristle Judd
In Absentia: Ian Bent, Thomas Mathiesen
Special Guest: Bob Kerrey
2002 Schenkerian Analysis
Co-Chairs: Bill Rothstein and Frank Samarotto
Faculty: Matthew Brown, Nicolas Cook
In Absentia: Charles Burkhart, Robert Snarrenberg
Special Guest: Carl Schachter

2003 Transformation Theory
Co-Chairs: Richard Cohn and Joseph Straus
Faculty: Edward Gollin, Henry Klumpenhouwer, Robert Morris, John Roeder
Special Guest: Milton Babbitt

2004 Musical Form
Co-Chairs: William Caplin and Janet Schmalfeldt
Faculty: Jonathan Bernard, Scott Burnham, Robert Morgan
Special Guest: Charles Rosen

2005 Rhythm and Temporality
Co-Chairs: Harald Krebs and Justin London
Faculty: Kofi Agawu, Christopher Hasty
In Absentia: David Cohen, Pieter van den Toorn
Special Guest: Steve Reich

2006 Chromaticism
Co-Chairs: Patrick McCreless and Daniel Harrison
Faculty: David Kopp, Richard Kramer, Charles Smith, Deborah Stein
Special Guest: Gregory Proctor

2007 Schoenberg and His Legacy
Co-Chairs: Andrew Mead and Severine Neff
Faculty: Michael Cherlin, Ethan Haimo
In Absentia: Brian Alegant, Walter Frisch
Special Guest: Allen Forte

2008 Jazz Meets Pop
Co-Chairs: Henry Martin and Walt Everett (in Absentia)
Faculty: John Covach, Cynthia Folio
Also in Absentia: Lori Burns, Steve Larson (R.I.P.)
Special Guests: Lewis Porter and Albin Zak

2009 Cognition and Perception
Co-Chairs: Lawrence Zbikowski and David Huron (in Absentia)
Faculty: Robert Gjerdingen, Elizabeth Marvin
Also in Absentia: Eric Clarke, Fred Lerdahl
Special Guest: Eugene Narmour

142
2010 MUSICAL AESTHETICS
Co-Chairs: Berthold Hoeckner and Alexander Rehding
Faculty: Steven Rings, Fred Maus, Susan McClary
In Absentia: Daniel Chua, Martin Scherzinger
Special Guest: Lawrence Kramer

2011 STATE OF THE DISCIPLINE
Faculty: Kofi Agawu, Thomas Christensen, Henry Klumpenhouwer
Patrick McCreless, Janet Schmalfeldt, Joseph Straus

THE MANNES INSTITUTE
COMES TO A NATURAL AND SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.
A JOB WELL DONE.